THE AUTHOR OF TRIXIE

By

William Caine

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THE AUTHOR OF "TRIXIE"

WHAT THIS STORY IS ABOUT

"Everyone has, at least, one novel in him," and Archdeacon Roach puts this theory to the test.

He writes what proves to be a "best seller"; but cannot reveal his authorship and, at the same time, preserve his Archidiaconal dignity.

Bisham Dunkle, a poet, accepts responsibility for the book; but demands not only the Archdeacon's consent to his marriage to his daughter Chloe; but a settlement of seven hundred pounds a year, and all the royalties the book earns.

The Archdeacon loathes Dunkle; but surrenders, and the pseudo-author enjoys his success and popularity until his publisher and public commence pressing for another book.

THE AUTHOR OF "TRIXIE"

BY
WILLIAM CAINE

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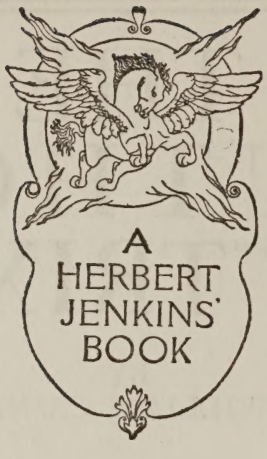

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TO
EDWARD FULTON WALKER

State Library

The people in this story are all purely imaginary, with the exception of one of the members of the Committee of Authors, who is intended to be a caricature of myself.

WILLIAM CAINE.

THE AUTHOR OF "TRIXIE"

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CHAPTER I

(1)

"EVERY man and woman," said the Bishop of Pontefract, "has one novel in them."

There are not many clubs where you can hear things as good as that, things so original, so profound, so well expressed. In fact there is but one—the Athenæum. I need not fear to say this, for I am not a member.

They were chatting over their after-

luncheon coffee, the Bishop, the Master of the Buckhounds, the King's Remembrancer and old Mr. Lucas-Gore. Not far away sat Archdeacon Roach, listening to what they were saying while he pretended to read the *Church Times*.

"I wonder," he thought, "if *I* have a novel in *me*," and smiled.

(2)

The idea was indeed sufficiently fantastic. Anyone less likely than the Archdeacon to give birth to so lewd a thing as a work of fiction can not readily be imagined.

Notorious throughout England alike for his learning (he had edited the Commentaries of Lactantius on the Epistles of Dolens) and for his piety (*vide* that immensely successful little book of his, "Thoughts About Heaven"), he demon-

strated his respectability by living with a wife and seven daughters in a great big Queen Anne house in the heart of Old Kensington, of which parish he was the Vicar. An admirable man. A splendid fellow. Rich, too, very, through his wife, who had been a Whitley of Bradford. Yes, a very fine type of clergyman. And he looked it. He was big and burly—almost, indeed, beefy—copiously chinned, generously curved in front, with large, shapely legs which filled out his gaiters as gaiters ought to be filled out. He had heaps of beautiful wavy hair, partly white and partly red, in streaks. His eyebrows were huge—almost they suggested tooth-brushes—and quite red. His round and wide-set eyes were pale blue, a very unusual tint. His nose was a promontory. His whiskers were burning bushes. His vast mouth—but I waste our time in thus

cataloguing the features of a face whose true glory was its saintly yet genial expression. Here was no rigid ascetic; here no fanatical persecutor. When you looked on Archdeacon Roach you were apt to be reminded neither of Simeon on his pillar nor of Torquemada tightening his thumbscrews. Did you think of St. Francis of Assisi? But this is unprofitable. I only want to make it clear to you that Archdeacon Roach was both a very good and a very broad man; he could, I mean, temper if not with tolerance, at least with sympathy that uncompromising attitude towards the vices and follies of other men which, as a clergyman, he was bound to maintain. But this is not to say that he was the sort of clergyman whom you would expect to find writing a novel. Emphatically, he wasn't. Emphatically, too, he never expected to find

himself doing such a thing. That is why he smiled a moment ago behind the *Church Times*, just as anyone else would have smiled at the idea of Archdeacon Roach coming out as a fictioneer.

(3)

"I wonder," he thought, "if *I* have a novel in *me*," and smiled and slowly broke off the ash of his Corona against the edge of the ash-tray and slowly sipped from his glass of very old cognac. "I wonder," he thought, and smiled again. But this time the smile was a trifle fatuous. The idea now pleased rather than amused him. He dismissed it (for old Mr. Lucas-Gore had started out upon an anecdote concerning Henry James, the point of which escaped him just as he got there), and it sank quietly into his subconscious mind. About an hour later, while he strolled

back to Kensington (he was, to be precise, passing the Albert Memorial), it rose again as quietly, and this time the smile which it provoked was definitely a friendly one. Familiarity with this idea had bred in the Archdeacon not contempt but affection. He was beginning, you perceive, to toy with it. This time he didn't dismiss it. He thought, "And why not?"

He was lost.

From that moment he had no peace. I don't propose to detail his struggles. They would not repay our examination. Everybody has gone through something of the kind. I don't mean that everybody has written a novel. That, of course, would not be quite true. But everybody has at least thought of doing it, and nearly everybody has tried. Of those who have tried, only about ten per cent. have failed, while of the ninety per cent. who have

carried the adventure through I suppose a generous three-quarters must have been published. So it would be foolish of me to dwell at any length upon the gestation and genesis of the Archdeacon's book, since practically everybody who reads this one of mine has first-hand experience of these uncomfortable processes.

It is enough if I say that, five months later, the good man's tale was written and that no living soul but himself knew it. Yes, clandestine had been his dallying with the Muse, clandestine and therefore exquisite. Not a moment but had been delicious that he had filched, for this doubtful purpose, from hours properly attributable to the performance of his archidiaconal functions. And how many of such moments there were his recording angel—not the Archdeacon—had noted. Yes, this great Churchman, this pattern

father and husband, had listened to the voice of the inward tempter and was now, poor wretch, no better than a secret novelist.

Worse.

Since he could not conceal from his wife and daughters the fact that he was spending several hours each day behind the locked door of his study, and since he realised that they must be curious as to what the business might be which so steadily occupied him, he gave out to them that he was engaged upon a careful revision of his Lactantius, preliminary to producing a second edition of that work. In other words, he lied to them in the most barefaced and detestable fashion.

(4)

This is a miserable beginning to what you hoped was to be a pleasant story;

but I can't help it. And there is far worse to come: far, far worse. I am very sorry, but what am I to do? Abandon my project and take another theme? Impossible! This tale is in me and has got to come out if it will. One does not abandon one's themes, though it is a fact that now and then they abandon one—and what a relief that is! No, even if I drive you into the arms of a rival my tale must forth.

The Archdeacon, then, having done this dreadful thing, found that two courses were open to him: (1) to suppress by fire the bright creature of his fancy, or (2) to give it to the world. The first alternative, for reasons which I shall tell you in a moment, was unthinkable. The second, however, seemed to be impossible; for not without exciting a horrible scandal, not without furnishing to the enemy cause most joyously to blaspheme, might the

reputable Vicar of Old Kensington proclaim himself a romancer, if ever, at any rate, he meant to be a bishop. And he meant most resolutely to be a bishop; if not an archbishop. His wife wished it. But that was nothing. He wished it himself.

He was sufficiently well read to be aware that at least two of England's greatest novelists have been clergymen of her Church; but what, he felt, was all very well for cock-fighting, three-bottle, eighteenth-century clerics (a Dean though one of them might be) was not at all well for a modern metropolitan archdeacon, who had edited Lactantius and published his thoughts about Heaven and meant to be a bishop.

No.

Even had his novel been of a religious character the thing was impossible. And

the character of his novel was not in the least religious. Its morals, he trusted, were sound; vice didn't triumph over virtue or anything like that; but he could not pretend that his story was in the least calculated to turn anybody's feet from the broad into the narrow path. While preparing it, he had allowed the Artist (whom he had so happily discovered within him) to have his way entirely. The Pastor of Souls had strictly not been allowed to collaborate.

No, it was out of the question for the name of Archdeacon Roach to appear upon the cover of "Trixie." Quite absolutely not to be thought of.

Yet it was equally out of the question that the story should not appear. There was that Artist fellow to be reckoned with. Was he the man to allow the fruit of his five months' labour to be abolished or

hidden away in a drawer? He was not. Out the book must come, to court the verdict of the public—the verdict which that Artist rather flattered himself was going to be not wholly unfavourable. Not wholly. No.

He suggested to the Pastor of Souls the adoption of an alias. The Pastor shook his head. He gravely misdoubted the security of an alias. To adopt an alias is to set every busybody to the work of discovering whom it conceals; and sooner or later the truth is ferreted out. And this particular truth must, simply, not be ferreted out.

Anonymity, then? How about anonymity?

No, thought the Pastor; anonymity wouldn't do either. Anonymity was just as dangerous as pseudonymity. Equally calculated to set the busybodies going.

Sooner or later, sooner or later, the cloak of anonymity was sure to be torn away. Sure. Absolutely.

"Why, then," said the Artist, "I'll tell you what."

"What?" inquired the Pastor of Souls.

"Do," said the Artist, "as Bacon did. Get a Shakespeare. Publish 'Trixie' under the name of some other man, someone who can actually be pointed out as the author, someone whose photograph can be published in the magazines, someone who can be interviewed and run after. If you do that there will be nothing to excite the curiosity of the busybodies. Your secret will be as safe as houses."

"Now," said the Pastor of Souls, "that's a very clever idea of yours. Very clever indeed. It certainly seems to deserve consideration. Yes. I should say that

it is decidedly worth thinking about. Decidedly."

The Archdeacon proceeded to think about it.

CHAPTER II

(1)

HE had not thought about it very long before he had come to the conclusion that young Bisham Dunkle was his man.

This Dunkle was one of the numerous young gentlemen who came to the rich Archdeacon's house in order to converse with his daughters. He came oftener than anybody else, for he was a prime favourite with the ladies of the household. It seemed, indeed, to the Archdeacon that Dunkle must take all his meals at the Vicarage.

He was a youth of astonishing, though

not very masculine, comeliness. He had quite black hair, which he wore plastered evenly rearwards from his forehead, to remind the observer, with its fine polish and its longitudinal corrugations, of the back of a slug, and to develop at last into a thick mane which just cleared the collar of his coat. His eyes were large and lustrous, and in the socket of the left one he carried habitually a monocle rimmed with black bone. His nose was straight and slender, his lips were thin but beautifully fashioned, his teeth were splendid, and his chin was magnificent. He was tall and slight—the manly Archdeacon could have broken him with one hand—and he had a fluting voice and a bleating laugh, and long, delicate, exquisitely manicured fingers; and he was always dressed very carefully and very becomingly. As a ball-room dancer he was without his

peer. He had a private annual income of some three hundred pounds, and he wrote little poems which he sold to the magazines for anything between five shillings and a guinea a time. He had financed the publication of two collections of these things, one called *Bouchées* and the other called *Chrysoliths*. His age was twenty-four.

The Archdeacon loathed him. He thought him—and rightly—decadent, poor, ill-mannered and vapid.

Yet he was forced to admit that no one whom he knew seemed so well fitted as was Dunkle to play Shakespeare to an archidiaconal Bacon.

A poet with two published volumes to his credit—what more natural or proper than that his name should appear on the back of a novel?

Since he had as yet published nothing

but poetry, the critics were quite unfamiliar with his prose style. Dunkle would be accepted without question as the author of what the hand of Roach had written.

The youth, moreover, was poor. That is to say, pliable. That is to say, purchasable.

The Archdeacon supposed that he would be able to come to terms with him for a matter of fifty pounds, or a hundred at the outside.

"I'll put it to the fellow," he decided, "to-day, after luncheon, or if, by any chance, he's not in to luncheon, to-night, after dinner."

(2)

Dunkle dropped in to luncheon, and he was the only young man to do so. Thus the opportunity which the Archdeacon

desired was given him with the least possible delay. He took it with the least possible hesitation.

No sooner were the girls and their mother safely on the other side of the closed dining-room door than the Archdeacon, as he pushed the port across the table, said: "Did you ever think, Dunkle, of writing a novel?"

Dunkle filled himself out a glass in silence, for the liquor he was about to quaff was worthy of all reverence. He sipped, rolled his tongue, swallowed, rolled his eyes, and said: "No, Archdeacon, not particularly. Why do you ask?"

"In order," said the Archdeacon, "to bring the subject of novels and novel-writing upon the *tapis*."

"I see," said Dunkle. "But you must have some good reason for introducing so

very dull a topic. May I ask what, precisely, it is?"

"I'll tell you," said the Archdeacon, "if you'll give me your word of honour as a gentleman that what I say shall go no further."

"Yes," said Dunkle, "I'll do that. Proceed, my dear sir. Proceed."

"Well," said the Archdeacon, "*I* have written one."

"You?" cried the young man, opening his eyes very wide. "You, Archdeacon? You have written a novel? Well, I'm blowed! What on earth possessed you to do such a frightfully commonplace thing?"

The Archdeacon, beginning with the observation of the Bishop of Pontefract in the Athenæum Club, told him all about it. Dunkle sipped port and listened without saying a word.

But—"Why," he kept asking himself, "is the old cock telling me this? Why *me*?" He was soon to learn.

"Of course," the Archdeacon concluded, "a clergyman of my position and repute cannot come out as the author of a fiction. The thing's not to be done. You appreciate its hopeless impropriety? Yes? I thought you must. To publish anonymously or under a pseudonym won't do, either. The secret would not fail to leak out. What, then, is to be done, my dear Dunkle?"

"Why," said Dunkle, "the simplest and best thing is to put the manuscript on the fire. It is, you tell me, a hundred and fifty thousand words long. I should say that such a manuscript might be destroyed in half an hour or a little less. I have nothing to do this afternoon. Let me give you a hand. I will tear up the sheets and

feed the flames with them, and you shall stir them with the poker. Or we can do it up in a parcel with some good big stones and sink it over Chelsea Bridge. Or we can——"

"No, Dunkle," the Archdeacon interrupted, "you're on the wrong tack, my boy, entirely. I have written this story, and I have got to see it in print. I have simply got to. You, too, are an author. You understand how it is with me. Supposing anyone were to suggest to *you* that you should burn or drown one of *your* lyrics."

"Forgive me, Archdeacon," said Dunkle stiffly, "but my lyrics are not in question here. It is only your novel that we are considering. Of course, if you are resolved to have the thing published, there's no more to be said. But if you can't publish it either anonymously or under

a pen-name or under your own, how, exactly, do you propose to go to work?"

"I propose," said the Archdeacon, "to publish it under yours."

Dunkle paled. "My dear sir," he observed, "there is surely a limit to what one is required to accept from one's host, even in the way of mistaken humour. Shall we not both forget what you have just said? Shall we not join the ladies?" He made as if to rise.

"Keep your seat, Dunkle," said the Archdeacon. "Believe me, I never was less inclined to be humorous. This is a business proposal that I'm making to you, my dear boy. I am asking you to do something for me. In return I am prepared to make it worth your while. I fancy that fifty pounds——"

Dunkle rose. "My poor gentleman,"

he said, "have you taken leave of your senses? Do you really imagine that for fifty pounds, or anything like it, I am going to blast my literary reputation by pretending to be the author of your or any novel? Yet——" he hesitated—"on second thoughts, I'm not sure that it is altogether beyond the bounds of——"

"Come," said the Archdeacon, "say seventy-five."

"I will say nothing at present," Dunkle replied, "except that I may, after all, perhaps be not unwilling to fall in with this immoral plan of yours. But it will be at a price, and that price will be my own. To enable me to estimate the value of my services to you, or perhaps I should say the extent of the damage to myself, I must, before I go any further into this tenebrous affair, have a look at your manuscript. I shall be dining here to-

night, for I am escorting one of your daughters to a dance. Let me take your novel away now. I will read as much of it as I can bear, and to-night, after dinner, I will state my terms or definitely reject your proposal."

"I will fetch the manuscript," said the Archdeacon.

CHAPTER III

(1)

IT was six hours later.

Again the ladies rose and left the Archdeacon and Dunkle together. Again the Archdeacon passed the port to his visitor. "Well?" he inquired.

Again Dunkle filled his glass. He sipped and sighed his satisfaction.

"I have read quite enough of your novel," he said, "to form an opinion of its merits."

"Ah!" said the Archdeacon. "Ah, hah! Yes?" He smiled hopefully.

"Your grammar," said Dunkle, "is generally correct, and with your spelling

I have no fault to find. Your punctuation is, I believe, faultless. But these things do not, my dear Archdeacon, make a great novel. As for your tale, it is soupy, prolix and ordinary, while it lacks verisimilitude and abounds in the grossest faults of construction. It is, moreover, in a number of places, timidly erotic. The effect is quite nauseating. Were you to publish this book under your own name, your reputation would sustain a blow from which it would never recover. It seems to me that you would pretty certainly be compelled to resign not only your Archdeaconry, but your Vicarship, and that, of course, would never do."

He paused to sip at his glass and readjust his monocle.

The Archdeacon, with his napkin, wiped away the foam which had gathered at the

corners of his mouth. He was ready to break the port decanter upon Dunkle's skull. But he would not have been an Archdeacon had he not learnt to control his feelings. So he swallowed down his rage, made his voice as soft as silk, and said: "I have told you, Dunkle, that there is no question of publishing my story under my own name. I fear, from what you have said, that there is not much chance of my publishing it under yours. Or am I wrong?"

"As to that," said Dunkle, "all depends on what price you are prepared to pay for the accommodation. I suppose you are determined to produce this book."

"Absolutely," said the Archdeacon. "I may add that your adverse and, I believe, jealous criticism doesn't weigh a hair with me. I am not to be convinced that 'Trixie' is valueless by the verdict of one reader.

The public, I am determined, shall have its opportunity of judging how I write fiction."

"Oh!" said Dunkle gloomily, "the public will probably like your book very much. It's a novel that any publisher will see his money in. But this is not to say that it is a work which I am precisely bursting to have attributed to me."

"Nevertheless——"

"As you say, Archdeacon—nevertheless. If you will pay my price, I will incur this shameful responsibility. But only for the sake of your family. I would not have Mrs. Roach and your daughters (who have been immensely kind to me) made the laughing-stock of London society by reason of your conduct."

The Archdeacon again controlled himself.

"And your price is——" he inquired icily.

"Chloë," said Dunkle.

The Archdeacon gasped. "My daughter?" he cried.

"Even so," Dunkle assured him. "Your fifth daughter, to whom I have been engaged for the last three weeks. If you will consent to our marriage——"

The Archdeacon snorted. "My dear fellow," he said, "please talk sense. How do you propose to keep a wife? What is your income?"

"Three hundred a year," said Dunkle, "as near as makes no matter. By my poetry, though, I earn, most years, an extra seven or eight pounds."

The Archdeacon threw himself back in his chair. "And do you suppose," he enquired, "that Chloë is the girl to set up house with you on three hundred and seven or eight pounds a year?"

"No," said Dunkle. "We shall require

at least a thousand. But that will be all right. You shall settle an annual seven hundred on her."

"Believe me, my dear boy," said the Archdeacon impressively, "I shall do no such thing."

"Then, believe me, my dear Archdeacon," said Dunkle quite pleasantly, "I shall not lend you my name for your novel."

Silence fell upon the dining-room.

(2)

Here—since she is my heroine—it may not come amiss if I provide you with a trifle of information concerning this girl Chloë.

Fifth of the Archdeacon's bouquet of daughters, she was just turned seventeen years old. In an elfin way, with her pointed chin, long nose and big, green eyes,

she was pretty. She had her father's red hair and she wore it bobbed in a great crinkling fuzz, out of which, as out of a fiery mist, her little face palely peered. Her teeth were small, even and very white. Her figure was as lithe as a serpent's and almost as slender. She was just fifty-nine inches long. Her hands and feet were very little ones. Her voice was very soft. She wore her clothes very perfectly and they were always just six months ahead.

Her father found her a terrifying little creature. When she was near he could never be quite happy. She always made him feel that she was licking her lips over him. It was his pleasure and habit to hold forth at table (when, at any rate, guests were present) upon current topics, Art, Letters, Music and other things. Sometimes, in the very middle of a period, he would become conscious that Chloë was

watching him, and he would not be encouraged to proceed. She had never yet actually dried him up, but now and then it had been rather a near thing. Somehow the gaze of those huge green eyes was very disconcerting to the Archdeacon. They gave him an awkward sensation of being transparent.

None of her sisters had ever affected him in this way; not Lesbia, not Lalage, not Julia not Virginia, her elders; still less her juniors, Atalanta and Oenone. He almost wished the girl would marry. Yes, he felt that he could spare Chloë more easily than any of the others. Nevertheless, she must marry the right kind of man. He didn't want to see her throw herself away, poor child. He could not spare her so easily as all that. But only let her get engaged to some really good, sterling, manly fellow with a heart of gold and about ten thousand

a year, and he, the Archdeacon, was not going to raise any difficulties whether on the score of the young man's social position or his lack of intelligence or anything else. And if he lived in America, why, so much the better.

The news, therefore, that the girl had engaged herself—actually engaged herself to this cheap poet, this decadent, unsubstantial organ-grinder of a Dunkle, impressed the Archdeacon very disagreeably. That Chloë should be engaged was good, since it was a step in the direction of her departure from her girlhood's home; but that she should be engaged to a man with only three hundred and sixpence a year was bad, very. As for the proposal that he, her father, should endow her with an income of seven hundred pounds, it was satisfactorily susceptible of characterisation in no single form of words which the Arch-

deacon had anywhere at his lawful command.

He did not, as we have seen, attempt to characterise it. He simply declined to entertain it. Of course, if Chloë intended to marry this Dunkle, marry Dunkle she would; he didn't flatter himself that he could do anything whatever to stop her, the time for that sort of thing having long gone by for fathers. He was, therefore, ready to give his consent to this marriage, crazy though he felt it to be, if Dunkle would in return agree to figure before the eyes of the world as the author of "Trixie." But this seven hundred a year he did *not* propose to disgorge. That was a bit too much altogether. Rather than that, he felt he would be willing to consign his novel to oblivion. Yes. But he trusted that it wouldn't come to that. Dunkle was not the only hard-up scribbler in London.

He decided to say this, or something like it, to Dunkle and crush him.

(3)

"My dear fellow," he said, thus putting an end to that silence which began a page or so back, "I shall, of course, be very sorry if you decide not to help me, but I may remind you that, besides yourself, there are other literary young geniuses about. In point of fact, such people are, in London, ten a penny. I shall suit myself very easily. Let us agree to forget this abortive negotiation. Unless, that is to say, you will take Chloë with a couple of hundred pounds down and——" he smiled, "my blessing."

"No, Archdeacon," said Dunkle. "It's seven hundred a year or nothing; and unless you disgorge it there won't be any wedding. In fact, it'll be a bit more than

seven hundred a year, because we shall require you to set us up with furniture, say five hundred pounds' worth of it. You can't expect us to start housekeeping without any sticks, can you? Yes—seven hundred a year, and five hundred in furniture's my minimum. Chloë and I can rub along all right enough on a thousand between us, but not a penny less. I want to marry Chloë, and she wants to marry me; but we're not such a pair of mutts as to expect to be happy together if we have to be poor. Our generation looks facts in the face, my dear sir. We don't blink 'em and trust to luck, as lovers did in good Queen Victoria's day. We like to see just what we're in for, and unless Chloë and I can see that we're in for a thousand a year, there's nothing doing absolutely. So throw up your hands and take your

medicine, Archdeacon, for you've gone too far to turn back."

"What do you mean by that?" the Archdeacon enquired.

"Why," said Dunkle, "I mean that if you don't accept my terms, I'll give you away to the journalists, that's all. Be pleased to remember that I've read quite two-thirds of your novel and that the manuscript, all in your handwriting, is still in my possession."

The Archdeacon could not turn pale; so he turned purple.

"But," he shouted indignantly, "you can't do that, you know. You gave me your word of honour as a gentleman."

"So I did," Dunkle agreed, "but that was before I knew that you wanted to do business with me. The moment you turned what I imagined to be an after-luncheon chat into what you wanted to

be a business deal, we ceased to be gentlemen and became mere bargainers, for whom such things as words of honour do not exist. No, you have given yourself into my hands, Archdeacon, and I propose to use my advantage quite ruthlessly. So settle seven hundred a year on Chloë and, as soon as we are married, I will accept responsibility for your awful novel. My position among writers will, of course, be seriously compromised; but I would suffer worse than that to obtain Chloë, and I am young enough, thank Heaven, to live the disgrace down. At least, I hope and believe so."

The Archdeacon turned black. "You unscrupulous young scoundrel," he cried. "Would you extort money from me by threats?"

"Certainly," said Dunkle, "I would commit any crime to get Chloë, short of

marrying her on an insufficient income. Aren't I ready to conspire with you to launch that piffling product of yours on the book market? What's a little honest extortion by the side of that? Besides, if I were some Jew with fifty thousand a year, you'd be only too glad to do the right thing by Chloë, because you'd know you wouldn't get me for her if you didn't. It isn't, moreover, as if you couldn't easily afford it. So come, my dear Archdeacon, realise that I have you cold and that the wisest thing you can do is to pay up and look pleasant; for as sure as you wear gaiters down your legs, if you don't accept my terms, I'll put the Press wise to what you've been up to and that no later than to-night."

(4)

Let us not prolong this agony. No sensitively minded person can take pleasure

in the spectacle of a just man (however red his whiskers are) struggling in the toils. When those toils are largely of his own manufacture, the scene becomes only the more intolerable. To the pain of looking on while he is robbed by a rascal we add our sorrow that he should have given that rascal the opportunity of robbing him; were he, too, a rascal, it would be our duty to rejoice at the false step which has now landed him in trouble. But our tears alone may attend the false steps of the good; our tears alone their consequences greet.

Suffice it, then, that the Archdeacon gave presently in, as was, of course, what had to happen. The manuscript being in Dunkle's possession, it was not open to its author to put it in the fire and defy a villain to do his worst. But apart from this, even though the Pastor of Souls might more

easily contemplate taking such a step than providing his daughter with seven hundred a year, the Pastor of Souls, I may remind you, was not the only person to be considered. You are forgetting the Artist Fellow.

What did that vain and improvident wastrel care for the pocket of the Archdeacon, if only his desire to be printed might be satisfied? What was it to him though the good gentleman with whom he resided should, with his whole family, be brought to a crust, so long as a certain unborn novel should first have seen the light? Put on the fire what he had toiled five months to make! Not so! Not so, by Heaven! "Trixie" must out at any cost. "And after all," he argued in the Archdeacon's ear, "Dunkle's right. You can afford it perfectly well. Those Belgian Distillery shares are worth double to-day

what you gave for them. Don't wait for them to go any higher. If you sell out to-morrow you'll clear twenty thousand. And you can realise on that £10,000 of Ostend Casinos. You know you've been a bit doubtful of them lately. If you hold on you'll get stung as like as not. But what I say is, I'm going to see those press notices if it blinds me."

To be brief, he had his way. The Archdeacon capitulated.

"But," he said—and this was his last kick—"the book must appear before you and Chloë marry. On that I positively insist. You have gravely shaken my confidence in you, Dunkle, and I cannot risk having you draw back, when you have got all out of me that you want, and decline to complete your part of our bargain."

"I'm afraid," said Dunkle, "that you'll

have to. For do you not see, my very dear sir, that if that book comes out with my name on it *before* the wedding, Chloë will refuse to marry me. And quite right too. What's more, nothing would induce me to marry a girl who would be willing to marry the author of your beastly tale. So if she didn't break our engagement, *I* should have to. But in either case, my bargain with you would go phut. So you see that you'll have to trust me, and that's all there is to it. But you needn't be afraid. I am not the man to break a bargain. In business I am the soul of probity. It is understood that if you do your part I will do mine, at whatever cost to myself. The odium of having written your novel shall rest upon me, not only when it is published, but for ever after. No living soul save us two shall ever know the truth. And now it only

remains for me to point out to you that the sooner Chloë and I are wedded, the sooner 'Trixie' will make her bow to the public."

The Archdeacon sighed heavily. "So be it," he said.

"There's just one other thing," Dunkle observed. "Any money that the book may earn is to be mine. I sincerely hope it won't be much, but, whatever there is, I may as well have it. Do you agree?"

The Archdeacon had no more fight in him. "I agree," he said brokenly. "The wine is with you, Dunkle."

(5)

The door of the dining-room was opened with violence and Chloë came in, caparisoned for the taxi in a large cloak of ermine fur.

"Buck up, Bisham," she said crossly,

"what the dickens do you think you're doing, boozing port in here with the governor? We ought to have been off ten minutes ago."

Dunkle got up. "Tuck in your shirt, old plum," he responded amiably. "I've been fixing things with your father—about us, you know. He's going to stand you seven hundred a year, settled, and we're to be married just as soon as you say."

He paused for congratulations.

"Oh, are we?" she said. "Well, see here: unless you're out of this and into the cab inside of three seconds, you can wash me out of any arrangements you may be making for the future. I don't have too much use for young men that I have to dig up to take me dancing, no matter how they've been fixing things with my father." She turned on her heel, and, still talking, followed her betrothed out of

the room. The Archdeacon, seated at the table, heard her voice die away down the hall. A door slammed.

He smiled, a trifle wanly, and helped himself to port.

CHAPTER IV

(1)

IT now became the wretched Dunkle's business to make two typed copies of the Archdeacon's manuscript, one for submission to some publisher, the other for his own reference, and this he proceeded to do. As we have seen, the story bulked a hundred and fifty thousand words. Dunkle was no virtuoso upon the keys of his Remington. The stuff, moreover, that he was required to copy was, in his opinion, so revolting that it was as much as he could do to hold himself two hours daily at his task. But, averaging 1,500 words a day, he got the thing done in a little over three

months. During this period he was again and again on the point of throwing up the whole enterprise, but the completed manuscript proved, at last, the staunchness of his love for Chloë.

The Archdeacon, who hadn't a scrap of confidence in Dunkle, had insisted that his manuscript should be brought back to him, so soon as the work of copying it should have been completed. "For," he told Dunkle, "unless I am allowed with my own hands to put that bundle of papers on the fire, I shall never know when you won't be turning up to blackmail me. Only if I have seen, with my own eyes, the flames consume my manuscript, only then shall I be able to bid you defiance."

Dunkle had conceded the point. He had no wish to betray this man who was going to become his father-in-law. He

believed that the book might possibly enjoy a certain vogue, but he trusted that it would quickly be forgotten. To stir up talk about the thing, by accusing the Archdeacon of having written it, was what he never expected to be anxious to do. Let it come out and then let oblivion snatch it—that was his desire.

No sooner, therefore, was his typescript finished than he carried the manuscript round to the Vicarage and delivered it up to its author, who lost no time in reducing it, with Dunkle's enthusiastic aid, to a heap of ashes. From this burning Dunkle derived great pleasure. "If only," he thought, "we could have done this three months ago! But then," he reflected, "I should not be going to marry Chloë next Wednesday."

Yes, the wedding was as near as that; for all this time the preparations had

been going on busily. A studio apartment had been found in Chelsea; the five hundred pounds' worth of furniture had been bought and charged to the Archdeacon and installed; the bride's clothes had all come home; the banns had been put up; the presents had been received; the invitations had been issued; the Press and the police had been notified—in short, there was nothing more for Chloë and Dunkle to do but to get married. So married they got.

The only cloud on the brightness of the occasion was the appalling lumbago which kept the bride's father in bed and from which he was miraculously delivered that same evening.

There was no honeymoon. None of that kind of soupy nonsense for Chloë and Dunkle. They were married, went back to the Vicarage, drank a glass of champagne

or two and then cabbed it home to the studio, where Chloë had a model waiting for her. Did I tell you that Chloë painted? I don't believe I did. Hitherto she had only done it fitfully, but now that she was married she intended to make it her job in life. It is essential for a married woman to have an occupation; otherwise she tends to become the slave of her home. Chloë had no intention of turning into an unsalaried cook-parlour-maid.

So as soon as they were under their own roof the bride set to work upon her model, a youngish but excessively ugly and angular Scotch woman called Mrs. Mackay, who was at the moment enjoying a considerable vogue. Chloë posed her on all fours. We needn't linger in the studio. Let us accompany Dunkle to Henrietta Street, Covent Garden.

(2)

Only that morning the poet had received from Messrs. Capper and Ironsides the following letter:

102, *Henrietta Street,*
Covent Garden.

Dear Sir,

We beg to inform you that we have now carefully considered the MS. which you have submitted to us, and are pleased to be able to inform you that we shall be pleased to publish it at an early date. We shall esteem it a favour if you will favour us with a call at an early date, when we shall be pleased to discuss terms, etcetera.

Yours faithfully,
Capper and Ironsides.

Bisham Dunkle, Esq.

Dunkle had accordingly made an appointment by telephone for the same afternoon.

It was in no very happy frame of mind, I can assure you, that he travelled eastwards. Always throughout the execrable labours of the past three months he had been to some extent sustained by the faint hope that the Archdeacon's story might, after all, not find a market. This hope had never quite died within him until to-day. Now it was dead. If the very first firm of publishers who had seen "Trixie" had bitten, it was quite evident that the book was sellable. When he had told the Archdeacon that it was likely to please the publishers he had been dismally right. And here he was, within ten days of completing the typescript, on his way to negotiate terms with Capper's.

"Perhaps," he said between his teeth, "if I ask the earth it'll put them off; but

whether it does or not, the earth is what I'm going to ask. If I'm to destroy my reputation, I'll see that I don't do it for nothing."

So he demanded from Messrs. Capper and Ironsides a five hundred pounds advance and a royalty of twenty per cent., rising to thirty.

To his horror Mr Indermaur, the junior partner who interviewed him, agreed with the utmost alacrity to these monstrous figures.

"I won't conceal from you, Mr. Dunkle," he said, as with eager pen he filled up the blanks in a printed form of agreement, "that we entertain the very highest hopes of your novel. 'Trixie' is, in our estimation, a Winner. A Winner, Mr. Dunkle."

Dunkle paled. "Don't say that," he groaned. "For Heaven's sake don't say that. Not a Winner."

"Yes, Mr. Dunkle, a Winner; if not," Mr. Indermaur paused impressively, "a Best Seller, though that, of course, I cannot promise."

"Don't!" said Dunkle. "Please don't!"

"I see," said Mr. Indermaur, "that you're superstitious, Mr. Dunkle. It makes you uneasy to hear me prophesying success for 'Trixie.' Well, I'll say no more now; but two months hence we shall see. Yes, Mr. Dunkle, we shall see. Here is the contract. If you'll look it through now and sign it, time will be saved. The sooner you give us the right to begin, the better we shall be pleased."

Dunkle signed the contract. He was too heavily dispirited even to read it. Soon afterwards he shambled out of Mr. Indermaur's presence, with the air of a man who leaves the dock after being sentenced to five years' penal servitude,

and made his way to the Bards' Club, where he spent the rest of the afternoon drinking Absalom cocktails. So profound was his depression that not until he had swallowed fifteen of these potions could he summon up sufficient energy to go home.

(3)

These had been the last words of Mr. Indermaur to Dunkle: "I shall send out our first paragraph this afternoon."

Dunkle, therefore, knew that in all probability the announcement that he had written a novel, which Messrs. Capper and Ironsides were to produce, would be in several of the next morning's journals.

He had not consumed too many cocktails to understand that Chloë must on no account be left to make her own discovery of this matter. To allow the shock

to catch her unprepared would be sheerly barbarous; and who could say how she might react to it, what wild thing she might do in her despair at being given to understand that she was the wife of a novelist? He resolved to break it to her gently.

He found her washing her brushes at the hand-basin in the bath-room, for she was still a sufficiently young painter-in-oils to tackle this tiresome duty the moment she had finished work for the day.

"Hallo, old jug," he began. "Here you are then! I say, I've got some rather glorious news for you, you know. The fact is I've just extorted five hundred for a book from a publisher. How does that go down? Eh, how?"

"I don't believe it," said his wife simply.

"You don't, eh? Well then, there's the contract. Smell it." He thrust it against her nose.

She snatched it from him and, holding it between her soap-and-painty fingers, ran her eye over the first clause.

"'The work at present entitled "Trixie"'" she read aloud. "What work is that, Bisham? You don't mean to say you've been writing a narrative poem called 'Trixie'; because, if so, I can't bear it, and I shall scream and bite great pieces out of the furniture."

"Oh, no," he said, "make your mind easy. It's not a narrative poem. The fact is—" he spoke as casually as he could—"it's a novel, Chloë; a prose fiction, you know. Capper and Ironsides are going to do it at once. They've given me five hundred on account and a twenty per cent. royalty, rising to thirty.

They're tremendously bucked with the book. They say it's bound to go. Suppose it makes our fortune, eh? What about that? Eh, what about it?" He tailed off. He knew that he was talking unworthiness.

"Why, precisely, did you do this, Bisham?" she asked. She seemed to be quite calm, but she had stopped washing her brushes and her eyes were slowly waxing.

"I did it for your sake entirely," he said. "I want you to have a setting that is worthy of you, not this rotten studio. A thousand a year can't begin to provide you with your proper setting. A girl like you requires a setting that nothing under seven thousand a year can provide. You ought to have a limousine and a tiara and lots of stunning clothes and a big house to entertain in, with a conservatory and

palms. I can never hope to do anything like that for you out of poetry. The money's in fiction nowadays. Why shouldn't we get hold of some of it?" He hung his head. It was awful to hear his own lips saying such things.

"Before I pack up and return to father's," she said, still quite calmly (and how he loved her for those words!), "let me implore you, Bisham, for your own sake—not mine—to change the name of this book. You call it 'Trixie.' Well, if I were to write a mordant burlesque of the hogwashiest kind of sloppy *feuilleton*, I should have to call it 'Trixie.' You cannot——"

He was inspired. He saw salvation.

"But, my dear old cork," he cried, "don't you understand that that's exactly what I *have* done?"

"What is?"

"Why, made a burlesque. I tell you the book's a scream. You'll love it. But the really shrieking part of the whole jolly business is that Cappers think it's a serious effort. They take it to be a great sentimental story. That's why they want it so badly. Do you imagine they'd give sixpence for it if they thought it was a burlesque."

She looked at him through narrowed eyes. "Are you lying, Bish?" she asked.

"Lying? Lord, no! Do you think I'd lie to you on our wedding-day? I tell you the book's the wildest kind of a burlesque. If you don't believe me, let me read you some of it. I have a copy here; it's in my trunk. I'll get it." He darted out of the studio.

The last thing Chloë wanted to do was to go back to the Vicarage. She had, indeed, no faintest intention of doing so.

Her mention of her father's home had been purely rhetorical. She took the sofa and lit a cigarette.

Dunkle returned with the typescript of "Trixie." He sat down and began to read from it. This man was fighting for his life's happiness, you understand, and he was on his mettle. He adopted an exaggerated style of delivery which made what the good Archdeacon had written sound inimitably droll. Chloë, who wished for nothing so much as to be convinced, quickly began to laugh, and soon was helpless. Dunkle, his apprehensions allayed, now proceeded to find himself amusing. He, too, began to laugh. Presently it became impossible for him to continue. He abandoned his relieved soul to an ecstasy of merriment. The two young people rolled about, gasping and holding their sides. If the Archdeacon could have

seen them he would certainly have perished of mortification.

Chloë was the first to regain self-control. "Oh, Bish," she cried, "but it's colossal. It's elephantine. It's cosmic. I believe you're a genius, after all. Wow, wow, how I ache! And to think that Cappers take it seriously. Do you suppose the reviewers will? Won't it be rather too pricelessly peerless if they do, Bish? But I'm afraid that's rather too absolutely much to hope for altogether."

She was wholly reassured. Dunkle could hardly believe his ears, but he had to. There was no doubt about it. He had pulled it off. What had threatened to be his Waterloo had been converted, as by a miracle, into his Omdurman.

"Now," he thought, "if I can only kid the rest of the *illuminati* that the book's a jape, I'm saved. But can I? Well,

well; sufficient unto the day. The thought to freeze on to just now is that Chloë's lapped it up."

"How about din-din?" he inquired. "It's getting on for seven. Suppose we dress and feed at the Café Royal. Those five hundred quid were made to be spent, you know."

So they got rid of five of them on a buck dinner and then danced till morning at Johnny's Club.

CHAPTER V

(1)

TWO months later "Trixie" was published at seven shillings net.

Messrs. Capper hadn't, as you notice, let any grass grow up between their toes. Believing that they had a good thing in "Trixie," they had put their hearts into their work and rushed the book out like lightning.

They gave it a sweet jacket, showing a really pretty girl's face. They heralded it with innumerable paragraphs. They advertised it largely. They did everything they knew.

In spite of this, the book was an instantaneous success. The first edition of three

thousand was sold out in a week. The second edition of eight thousand went off like magic. The third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth followed. Then came the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, twenty-first and twenty-second. After the twenty-second the twenty-third appeared, and then the twenty-fourth, -fifth, -sixth, -seventh and -eighth.

By this time America had got it and was pouring it out by the ten thousand. They sold a quarter of a million in no time at all.

Dunkle's mail increased a thousand-fold. Everybody wanted to meet him, either in order to secure his attendance at their parties or to touch him for money. All the magazines and newspapers wanted to publish his portrait. The press-agents

were all after him. So were the Birthday Honours brokers.

Of these advances Dunkle took not the smallest notice. Money was pouring in upon him, and he was much too busy getting rid of it to think of answering letters. How much, first and last, he drew in royalties on "Trixie" who shall say? Not I. I have been told that he made fifty thousand pounds out of the book. I have been told that he made one hundred and seventy thousand out of it. I have been told that he made three hundred and six thousand out of it. I have been told that he made a cool million out of it. Actually a cool one. We are not required to believe these fairy tales. The prizes of the fiction market are substantial, but at their biggest they look very small potatoes beside those which are to be gained elsewhere. If you want to acquire money in impressive

quantities, don't waste your time making something that people can read; make something that they can eat or smoke or chew or wear or dance to or wash with or apply externally or take three times a day after meals.

I don't believe Dunkle made more than sixty or seventy thousand pounds out of "Trixie." Still, that is quite a nice little sum of money to get out of one novel. None of mine has made more for me. Dunkle, at any rate, and Chloë were well content with the way the royalties came in. They were human and young and ardent and it would have been perfectly monstrous and unnatural had they objected to being furnished with the means of satisfying their desire to have a superlative time. They were out of their Chelsea studio and into a house in Grosvenor Street almost before the ink was dry on Dunkle's

endorsement of his first post-publication cheque from Cappers. It amounted, I may tell you, to nineteen thousand pounds, four shillings and twopence.

At the same time Chloë set herself stoutly to realise that high ambition which dwells in every girl's heart, namely, to be the best-dressed woman in the world. A most horrible orgy of spending took place. Henceforward her days were passed wholly in Hanover Square and its purlieus. She lived surrounded by smiling modistes, smirking cutters, beaming skirt-hands, and ogling mannequins.

In her huge scarlet Bournville limousine she drove from dressmaker to milliner, from milliner to bootmaker, from boot-maker to corsetière, from corsetière to lingerie maker, from lingerie maker to glover, from glover to stocking merchant, from stocking merchant to furrier, from

furrier to another furrier, and from him to a third. Furs? Good gracious, I should say so. Ermine, sable, musquash, mink, skunk, chipmunk, squirrel, opossum, armadillo, Kolinsky, beaver, buffalo, pony, Russian lamb, iguana, Zam-buk, catafalque, chush-chush, blastoderm—she had them all. And all the rest. She went perpetually furred to the eyes and every day in a new fur. The heat was appalling that season, but she managed to survive by wearing nothing under her hairy coats except stockings, stays and a lawn combination.

The rest of her wardrobe was to match. I shall not describe it, for it is all out of fashion now and can be of interest to no one. I will only say that of costumes, hats, boots, shoes and all other things which a woman can hang, pin, fasten or pull on to herself she had, in no time at

all, as many as would have furnished a half-dozen of big shops.

I have mentioned her limousine. She had other cars—a landaulette, a runabout, a touring car. To look after and drive these vehicles, she maintained two shuvvers and a mechanic. They robbed her mercilessly, as did every one else who came near her—her butler, for instance, and her French maid and her *chef* and all the rest of her domestic staff.

She entertained. Her house in Grosvenor Street became a sort of free hotel for her friends and their friends and the friends of those friends' friends. The Dunkles were out a good deal, but it didn't seem to matter whether they were at home or not, the feasting and dancing went on in the Grosvenor Street house just the same. It began as a rule about half-past twelve, when a few of Chloë's intimates would drop

in for cocktails and a fox-trot or two in the drawing-room before lunch, and it ended at any time after three in the morning. They danced to the gramophone from half-past twelve till two ; after lunch they had an orchestra till six ; then they had the gramophone again till nine, when another orchestra came in for the night. They used Dunkle's study for roulette and baccarat.

By the end of the season Dunkle was fourteen thousand pounds in debt.

(2)

Anyone would have said at this time that Chloë and her husband were exuberantly happy. They weren't. Their ointment, believe me, lacked not its fly. Riotous behaviour (says the copy-book) frequently conceals a sorrowful preoccupation. This was a case of it. Chloë and Dunkle, for

all their apparent jollity, were at heart quite wretched.

Don't mistake me. Their debts didn't worry them. Their trouble went deeper than any debts can go. This was it—nobody would accept their account of "Trixie."

The reviewers either damned the book for a preposterous lump of false and sentimental twaddle or praised it for a notable masterpiece of pathetic and elevating sincerity. Not one of them discovered it to be a buffoonery, a ludicrosity, a burlesquerie of quite astonishing farcicality. The people who came by the score to interview Dunkle all treated him reverently. When he assured them that "Trixie" was nothing but a parody on the Sob-Stuff Novel, they supposed that he was joking and went away to write columns about the endearing modesty of this Great

Human Story-teller. Chloë backed him up valiantly, quite without effect. The interviewers praised her gowns and her scheme of house decoration and wrote in their papers that her hair was Titian red, which it wasn't. They said how impossible it would have been for Dunkle to write his book had his wife not been by his side to cheer him and strengthen him with her wonderful and beautiful belief in his work.

You might think that the friends of Dunkle and Chloë would be less incredulous. Not a bit of it. They simply told Dunkle and Chloë that it might be a clever enough try-on at a get-out, but that it wouldn't wash with them. "Trixie" was muck, they said, and Dunkle ought to be ashamed of himself. If he had to lower himself to write a novel, he might at least have written something decent by which they

meant indecent; something calculated to raise a howl; something that the libraries would be obliged to ban; something that would, at any rate, not bring discredit upon him and his coterie. But "Trixie," O Lord! Of all the potageries, this was surely the most soupy. A filthy slop of stuff. Obscenely wholesome. Absolutely pornographical, it was so sweet and tender. And now poor old Dunk, having in all good faith perpetrated this calamity, had come to himself, perceived what he had done, and, in a panic, had hatched up with Chloë this story about the book being a burlesque. No, no, it wouldn't do. Not with them. They knew better.

Don't imagine that they cut Dunkle's acquaintance. So long as he kept open house in Grosvenor Street his acquaintance was a thing to be cultivated. "Trixie," having made a fortune for its author, was

to be forgiven him. But though they continued to know him and be entertained by him, they made no secret of their scorn for his book. They were always chaffing him about it.

As for the people that swarmed round Dunkle and Chloë wherever they went outside their own house, it was, of course, hopeless to expect to convince them that "Trixie" was a joke. These people had wept happy tears over the book; they doted on it; they thought it the most lovely tale that had been written since "The Rosary." All they wanted to do was to shake Dunkle by the hand and tell him what a joy his beautiful tale had been to them, what good it had done them, how it had made this dingy and wicked old world a brighter and better place for them, how Life would never be the same for them now that they had

drunk at the fountain of his inspired optimism. And so on. It was at times all Dunkle could do to keep his hands off these bletherers. His own jeering friends were infinitely less trying to his temper.

No, decidedly Dunkle and Chloë were not happy.

If it hadn't been for all the money they were handling and the glorious spree they were having with it, they must have been downright miserable. It is a terrible thing for a brilliant young poet like Dunkle to know that he is universally credited with having written a sentimental Best Seller; it is a terrible thing for his wife (if she happens to be a girl like Chloë) to realise that her husband is famous throughout two hemispheres as the author of a dish of tripe. If they could have persuaded only a few of their intimates to perceive a comical intention in "Trixie"! But it

wasn't to be done. A joke which no one will share with you quickly loses its flavour. Chloë found it every day harder to remain unconvinced, Dunkle to pretend, that " Trixie " was a satirical masterpiece. The miserable young man saw the day fast approaching when the scales would fall from his wife's eyes and she would know the book for what it was, the day when nothing he might find to say would any longer avail to keep her hoodwinked. And then what ?

No wonder they were dissipated.

CHAPTER VI

(1)

THE success of his novel was naturally, to the Archdeacon, intensely gratifying. He never doubted —poor gentleman—that its colossal sale was proof of its artistic excellence. As it had been written, ostensibly, by his son-in-law, it was entirely in order for the Archdeacon to subscribe to three press-cutting agencies for notices of the book. He did this quite openly ; kept the little green, pink and white slips on the desk in his study ; read them (not all) aloud to his visitors ; spoke of " that astonishing young son-in-law of mine, Bisham Dunkle

—he wrote this 'Trixie,' you know, that everybody's reading."

The reviews he did not read aloud were those which vilified the book. "This novel," began one of these reviews, "ought to be burnt publicly by the common hangman." He did not read that review to his visitors. Nor yet the one which said: "This is probably the worst novel that has ever been written." There were not many notices of this kind, for most of the reviewers who disliked "Trixie" ignored it. These adverse reviews the Archdeacon, like a wise man, destroyed and forgot; those that were complimentary, however, he pasted into an album and read over and over again. They gave him intense pleasure, the intensest indeed that he had ever known; far, far beyond that which he had felt on being made an Archdeacon. And that had been sufficiently enormous.

"Yes," he would murmur, as he pored over the close-printed clippings, snuffing up their praise. "Yes, there *was* a novel in me. There was."

Of course no one, in the Athenæum Club and elsewhere, whom he engaged in conversation about "Trixie" gave him anything but comfortable words. It was known to all his world that Dunkle was his son-in-law. Well, you don't tell a man —not, at any rate, if he is an Archdeacon— that you think his son-in-law's book is hen's-meat. You simply don't do it. You say, "Charming, charming!" or "I haven't yet managed to get hold of it, but I hear on all sides that it is a wonderfully fine story"; or "You must be uncommonly proud of that boy's success." I assume, of course, that you are a gentleman—that is to say, the sole sort of person with whom the

Archdeacon was in the least likely to converse.

Only once did he meet with verbal criticism that was anything but kindly. It happened in a railway carriage in which he was going to Birmingham to preside at a meeting of the Anti-Gambling League. Opposite him sat a middle-aged, bearded person. Presently this person opened a handbag and produced a copy of "Trixie" which he began to read through a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles. Not shell-rimmed. Steel-rimmed. He was not, I mean, quite a very gentlemanly person.

The Archdeacon fought against temptation for the best part of three and a half minutes. Then he leaned forward, coughed and said: "Forgive me, sir, but I see that you are reading 'Trixie,' and are half-way through it. May I ask you your opinion of it?"

The bearded person lowered the book and gazed angrily at the Archdeacon through his steel- (not shell-) rimmed spectacles. "I perceive, sir," he said, "that you are a bishop or something of the sort; a priest, at any rate, of the Church of England. That being so, I must decline to tell you my opinion of this book. But I may tell you that I am only reading it because it was given to me as a birthday present by my young and only daughter, whom I passionately love. Last year she gave me a necktie, orange in colour and decorated with dogs' heads. I wore it, sir, for six months; because I love her. Now she has given me this book. This means that she wishes me to read it. So, sir, I read it and shall read it to the end, every last word of it, because I love her. And now, I pray you, permit me to proceed,

because I would fain be done with this sickening business."

The Archdeacon let it go at that. Subsequently he asked for their opinion of "Trixie" those alone who supposed that he was the author's father-in-law.

(2)

For the first month or two after the publication of "Trixie" the Archdeacon was much too happy in the success of his novel to grudge to Dunkle either a scrap of the fame or a penny of the money that was pouring in upon him. The Archdeacon was exceedingly rich, but he couldn't spend more than about half his income, for decency prescribes limits to what an English clergyman shall disburse on luxuries. He had, therefore, far more money than he required, or at any rate, than his position permitted him to use,

and it irked him in no way to see his daughter and Dunkle wallowing in wealth to which he strictly was entitled. On the contrary, indeed. For the more money Dunkle got out of "Trixie," the less likely was he to betray the Archdeacon's secret.

As for the fame, the loss of that was a thing to which the Archdeacon had, of course, resigned himself from the first. He might not, as the author of a quite worldly novel, aspire to become a Spiritual Lord, and a Spiritual Lord he was determined one day to be. It was wholly out of the question that any fame in connection with "Trixie" should be allowed to attach itself to him, and to this he had made up his mind. And at first he was perfectly content to see the impostor Dunkle going about enveloped in glory to which he had no title. This state of affairs lasted so long as the reviews kept

appearing; but when this source of excitement began a little to dry up, that Artist Fellow (of whom we wot), his appetite for praise quite unsated, began to make trouble and to demand that Dunkle be unmasked and honour be given where honour was due. The Archdeacon had the devil's own time with this person, who was just as conceited and avid of fame as is the next novelist you are going to meet. He wanted it to be known all over the world that it was he, not Dunkle, who had written that stupendous popular success, "Trixie." He didn't give a curse to be a bishop. The Pastor of Souls might talk himself cross-eyed; nothing he said had the smallest effect upon his associate, who simply repeated and repeated: "Well, all I know is, I wrote the book and I ought to have the credit of it, and the credit of it I propose to have."

It was now that the Archdeacon reaped the consequences of having excluded the Pastor of Souls from all collaboration when "Trixie" was being written. If the good Pastor had been allowed to have his say during that period he would have been to some extent responsible for the book; and now he would be in a position to demand his rights against those of the Artist, his rights namely, to remain hidden and to become a bishop if he could. He would at least have had a *locus standi* in the debate. As it was, he had none. Not, of course, that that made any difference to him. He argued and protested and pleaded just the same. But since he had had nothing to do with the writing of "Trixie" the Artist flatly refused to listen to him. No, the Pastor of Souls was no manner of use to the Archdeacon, who was left to contend with the Artist single-handed.

The struggle was protracted and ended, I regret to say, in the victory of the Artist. Yes, the Archdeacon and the Pastor of Souls were downed. The Artist took pen in hand and wrote what follows :

The Vicarage
Old Kensington.

My dear Bisham,

I should very much like to have a little chat with you at your early convenience. Say to-morrow for tea, at four.

Affectionately,
Samson Roach.

P.S.—My very dear love to darling Chloë

CHAPTER VII

(1)

DUNKLE, finding himself swamped in debts and bankruptcy staring him in the face, had naturally turned his thought to the production of another book. Having a name now with which (as he believed) to conjure, he carried a few dozen of his poems to Messrs. Capper and Ironsides in the confident expectation that they would jump at them. No volume of poems could, of course, hope to make money as "Trixie" had made it; but Dunkle felt that, properly engineered, such a volume with his name on it should be worth a good many thousands

of pounds to him. He longed, too, to show his true quality to the world. Could he but hear himself acclaimed a great or even a true poet, he would think the experience cheaply bought by all the annoyances which "Trixie" had occasioned him.

So one morning he called at the offices of Messrs. Capper with his poems in his pocket and put it to Mr. Indermaur.

Dunkle was much too important an author to be hacked into the street. Mr. Indermaur succeeded in restraining himself. He said: "Poems, Mr. Dunkle? Delightful. Most interesting. Indeed, I had no idea that you wrote verse. We shall of course, be proud to be privileged to peruse them. But I ought to tell you, Mr. Dunkle, that we are not the right people for poems. We have never yet published any, and, frankly, we have not the machinery

for disposing of such wares. You will do better, I believe, to submit this interesting and delightful volume to some house which specialises in poetry. But, of course, we shall be charmed to consider them."

Dunkle understood that his name wasn't going to conjure Messrs. Capper into producing any volume of his poems. He looked sulky and said nothing.

"What we were *hoping* for from you," said Mr. Indermaur, "was—need I say it?—another novel. Another 'Trixie,' if that is possible. Offer us another novel, Mr. Dunkle, with a good throbbing Heart Interest in it, and we shall not be slow to accept it. But poems? Well, as I was saying, poems we do not exactly hunger for. Not even yours, Mr. Dunkle. Not—even—yours."

Dunkle looked sulkier than ever. He put

his poems back in his pocket and got up. A violent temptation assailed him to tell Indermaur that "Trixie" was the work of Archdeacon Roach. Just to see what Indermaur would say and do. But he was accustomed to repressing this particular temptation (which assailed him fifty times a day) and he repressed it now.

"I shall not pay you to produce my poems, Indermaur," he said, "if that's what you mean."

"Oh," said Mr. Indermaur persuasively, "don't let us talk about poems, Mr. Dunkle. Let us talk about the new great novel you're going to write for us. Shan't us?"

(2)

Dunkle left the offices of Messrs. Capper and Ironsides in a very depressed state of mind. He had surely thought that Capper's

would not only do a book of poetry for him but also market it successfully. He knew better now.

"Yes," he said to himself as he shambled disconsolately along Henrietta Street, "I am now tarred all over and inches deep and permanently with the reputation of a successful novelist, and a novelist I am to be henceforward and for ever. There's not a publisher of the lot who will risk a dud threepence on my exquisite poems, though I have only to show myself with a new fiction to sell and they'll tear the beards off one another to handle it. If I'm ever to get these things of mine produced now, I shall have to do it under another name than my own. It's a pity," here he gave a rather dreadful little laugh, "that poetry—at least my kind of poetry—is no more permissible for Archdeacons than is fiction.

Otherwise I might invite His Whiskers to help me."

"Well," he went on, "money has got to be raised somehow, and soon, and since my poetry is evidently going to say nothing to the Beni Barabbas, I'd better gird up my loins and bloody (*) well write a successor to 'Trixie' for myself. I can draw ten thousand advance royalties from Cappers on the MS. at sight, and if Chlöe won't swallow it as another burlesque, she just needn't. Not that I believe she'll care now. What she wants, now, is money and lots of it. The same with me, for that matter. Yes, I'm afraid our ideals have rather faded out since we married. Thoroughly corrupt, that's what we are.

* Every novelist, who at all pretends to be taken seriously, is expected, nowadays, occasionally to use this word in this sense. Hitherto it has been absent (in this sense) from my works, but that reproach can no longer be levelled at me.—W. C.

Oh! cursed gold! And now to get some more of it."

He went back to Grosvenor Street, sat down and began to try to invent a plot for this novel that he proposed to write. Do you think he could discover anything of the kind? He couldn't. For fourteen days and nights he devoted his every solitary moment to the task of devising a story with a really strong Heart Interest. Nothing came; nothing whatever; no plot of any sort at all. He toiled valiantly; he even moiled; whatever he did, the result was the same—blank paper. The truth is that Dunkle's genius was purely lyrical. For narrative he had no turn. He could do you three neat enough little four-line stanzas on "Twilight" or to "A Green Fly caught in a Spider's Web," or about "The Sewage Farm," but when it came to plotting a story, he simply wasn't

there. At his fortnight's end he had achieved absolutely nothing but his hero's name, and this was only Leonard Bywater. What to do with this person he had not the faintest idea. He didn't even know where he lived—I mean whether the story was to be about London or Sussex or South Africa or where. Much less did he know when this Leonard Bywater lived—I mean whether he was a man of to-day or of yesterday or of to-morrow, though he felt pretty certain that he wasn't an Ancient Roman. As for his appearance, he might have had any kind of nose or eyes or hair, and Dunkle would have been none the wiser. It is almost impossible to be more vague than was Dunkle about this hero of his. He wasn't even interested in him. He disliked him, indeed, most heartily and wished for nothing less than the improvement of their acquaintance.

He didn't care a hang what happened to the blighter.

"Well," he decided at last, "it's no use going on any longer in this way, that's certain. I am evidently incapable of writing a novel, and, however gratifying that discovery may, from one point of view, be, from another it is immensely tiresome. Money, and lots of it, I must have, or Chloë and I are bust. Yet how am I to get any unless I have a manuscript to show or at least a few chapters of one? How? How? How?"

At this moment a note was brought to him by his second footman. It was the Archdeacon's invitation to tea. He read it and smiled for the first time in a fortnight. "By gum!" he said, smiting his knee. "Here's how. *He* shall do it. *He* shall. I'll threaten to tell on him if he won't. I'll undertake to queer his

bishopric for him unless he writes me a new novel."

He smiled again. This was the second time he had done it in a fortnight.

CHAPTER VIII

(1)

"I ASKED you to come round, my dear Bisham," said the Archdeacon; "I asked you to come round, because I want your advice on a matter of conscience."

"It's hardly for me, sir——" Dunkle began diffidently.

"Yes, it is," said the Archdeacon. "Indeed it is for you or nobody. You alone can do what is required to set my mind at rest. And so, not to waste words, let me tell you that it is my wish to take the world into our secret, to confess, in short, that I am the author of 'Trixie.'"

"Now," thought Dunkle, "what the

deuce is all this? This won't do at all."

"My dear Archdeacon," he said, "your offer is most generous; but, believe me, I have no wish to go back upon our bargain. I have lived through the worst of it by now. My reputation as a serious writer is gone beyond recall. I cannot permit you to make yourself uneasy about me."

The Archdeacon coughed behind his hand. "You mistake me, Bisham," he said. "It's about myself that I am uneasy. The time has come, my dear boy, for me to remember that I am an Archdeacon of the Church of England. It's a lie that we're acting, Bisham, and, come what may, I am resolved to proclaim the truth. My conscience will let me do no other."

Dunkle decided to abandon his scheme of threatening to expose his father-in-law

unless he wrote him another novel. Otherwise than thus must he achieve his purpose.

"That's all very well for you, Archdeacon," he said, "but how about me? Why am I to be branded a liar in order that your conscience may be relieved of a burden? I tell you I'm reconciled by now to being thought the author of 'Trixie.' I've got Chloë by this deal of ours, and a whole hill of money as well, and I'm quite satisfied. I strongly object to this idea of yours. It's bad enough to be known as the author of 'Trixie,' but to be known as the poet who agreed to be known as the author of 'Trixie,' no matter for what consideration, will be intolerable. I'd much rather appear in the eyes of the world as an honest, if rotten, novelist than as an artist who has sold his fair reputation for lucre. I say, be hanged to your conscience!"

"All right," said the Archdeacon, "be hanged to it by all means. Here's the truth, Bisham: I can no longer go lacking the fame which is my due. I wrote 'Trixie,' and 'Trixie' is by far the best Best Seller that's ever been seen. I want to be known as its author. I *must* be known as its author, Bisham. And what's more, Bisham, I *will* be known as its author."

"But," said Dunkle, "what's happened to you, Archdeacon? What's caused you to turn round like this? I can't understand——?"

"I can't understand it myself, Bisham. I only know that it is so. Six months ago my one wish was to keep my authorship hidden. To-day I can neither eat nor sleep for the longing which possesses me to declare it. To-day when I read a complimentary account of my book and find *you* being loaded with praises, I can hardly contain

myself. When I see a picture of you labelled 'The world-famous author of "Trixie,"' I am ready to beat my head against the wall. Oh! I was a fool and worse than a fool ever to yield to the temptation to write a novel. An archidiaconal Jekyll, I called from the depths of my being (where he had slumbered since my birth and where he might well have continued to slumber till my death) that Hyde whose popular and facile pen a mysterious fate has appointed to be the instrument of my destruction."

"Yes," said Dunkle eagerly, "if you make this thing public, it's all up with your advancement in the Church. Absolutely all U.P. it is."

"I don't care," said the Archdeacon, as he jumped up and began to stride about the room. "I can't go on like this. I can no longer endure hearing people tell

me what a clever fellow *you* are. I dare say I'm mad, but there it is. I must and will have the fame that is my due. Yes, though the sky fall and crush me!"

"I won't do it," said Dunkle. "Think of the scandal. Think of your family. Think of Chloë. It'll just about kill her with shame. Her father the author of 'Trixie'! She'll simply wilt and fade away."

"Well, but," said the Archdeacon, acutely, while he right-about-faced at the door, "it hasn't killed her to have her husband the author of it."

"No," Dunkle explained, "because I told her I wrote it as a joke, a burlesque, a parody on the Novel of Soupiness. But she'll never believe that *you* wrote it with any humorous intention. She's told me a hundred times that you've no sense of humour whatever. I don't say you have

or you haven't. I only say that you'll never be able to persuade Chloë that you meant to be funny with that book and that she will die of shame at being shown up as the child of its author. Now I don't want to have Chloë dying, or even crying. So I refuse to have anything to do with this nonsense of telling the truth. Of course I can't prevent you from doing it, if you insist; but I give you fair warning, Archdeacon, that I shall flatly deny your allegation that you are the author of 'Trixie.' And how you propose to get over that I don't quite see, for since your original manuscript is burnt, you haven't a scrap of proof that you wrote the book. It'll just be your unsupported word against mine, only *I* shall be able to point to the rather telling fact that you've said nothing hitherto and have let me take all the royalties and all the notoriety. Why,

Archdeacon, they'll simply think that you've suddenly gone off your castors—that's all they'll think. There's not a living soul that'll accept your story."

The Archdeacon halted by the window to stare distastefully at his son-in-law. "Bisham," he said at last, "you have your price. Name it." And off he went again at five miles an hour.

"Another novel," said Dunkle. "A manuscript on which I can raise ten thousand pounds advance royalties from Cappers. A book which will bring me in another fifty or sixty thousand to clear Chloë and me of debt and set us on our feet for the rest of our lives. Once we're out of debt we shall draw in our horns considerably. We've had our fling, and we'll be content to live much more simply from now on. So write me a successor to 'Trixie,' Archdeacon, and I promise that,

six months after its publication, I'll back you up in any story you care to tell about the true authorship of it and of 'Trixie.' But it's understood, of course, that I get all royalties on both books for ever."

"A new novel, eh?" said the Archdeacon reflectively. Again he halted—this time by the chimney-piece. "A new novel, eh?"

"That's the idea," said Dunkle. "Think," he went on, encouragingly, "how fine it'll be for you to have a lot more favourable reviews to read. You'll like that, sir."

The Archdeacon licked his lips. "Yes, Bisham," he said, "you're right. I shall like that excellently. Nor, having regard to the disclosure that will be about to be made, shall I, I believe, grudge you any of the praise that may at first come your way. As for the money, you'll be extremely

welcome to it. You swear to confess, though?"

"I swear," said Dunkle, and he thought; "And I shouldn't wonder if I do it, too, for what an advertisement it'll be! It'll boom that successor to 'Trixie' into the second half-million in no time."

"Good," said the Archdeacon. "I'll begin it at once. It'll take me something like six months, I expect. Allow it another three to be published, and another three of sale. Then we'll confess. Is that right?"

"That's right," said Dunkle. "I said six, but three'll do. And who knows? By that time you may have been given your bishopric."

(2)

It took the Archdeacon but three months to write the successor to "Trixie," so eagerly did he pant to begin hearing

people tell him what a splendid novelist he was.

To account during this period to his household for his renewed absorption in literary toil, he gave out, unblushingly, that he was once more busy upon his "Lactantius."

The moment he had written the last word of "Edgar and Lilian" (as the new book was called), he telephoned to Dunkle that the manuscript was ready for him.

Dunkle was at the Vicarage twenty minutes after replacing his receiver upon its hook.

CHAPTER IX

(1)

SINCE his marriage Dunkle, beyond correcting the proof-sheets of "Trixie," had not done a stroke of work. Not one. The poems which we have seen him offering to Messrs. Capper and Ironsides were things which he had written as a bachelor; failures, which had been rejected by all the magazines. Of course I don't mean *all* the magazines. Only those magazines which Dunkle considered worthy of his verse, *The Metropolitan Hermes*, for instance, *The Annual Review*, *The Hebdomadary Monthly*, *Style*, *The Quill Pen*, *The Jukes Journal*, *The Aesthetic Quarterly*,

The Counterblast, Mixed Pickles and *The Immondaine.* The rebuffs he had suffered had not, you comprehend, been delivered by *Hawkins's Weekly,* let us say, or *Snappets,* or *The Pigeon Fancier* or *Home Thoughts* or *The Flapper* or *The Hangman and Warder* or *The British Beanfeaster* or *Bulger's Magazine* or *Joy Bells.*

No, Dunkle's output as a married man had been nil. On the other hand he had nothing with which to reproach himself where revelling is concerned. He had put the glowing hours behind him with astonishing rapidity and success; he had lived furiously every day from morning till night, and then from night till morning. Not once had his young wife known him to be engaged in literary composition; not once had she so much as caught him filling his fountain pen. Much Chloë cared. She had not married him for his poetry, which she

didn't understand, but for his dancing and in order to get away from home.

Conceive then the surprise, not to say the chagrin it occasioned her to find that Dunkle was working again. She came down one afternoon, arrayed for Ranlingham (where the finals of the Naval and Military Pogo Races were to be jumped), and to her extreme annoyance did not find her husband ready in the hall. She screamed his name, but still be failed to appear. In twenty strides she was at the door of the room which was known (humorously) as The Study. She wrenched at its handle. The door was locked. " Bisham," she shrieked, " I'm waiting for you."

The door opened about two inches and Dunkle's nose became visible. " Go away," he said, " I'm working."

" Working ! " she echoed. " What the devil do you mean, working ? "

"I mean working," he said and shut the door. She heard the key turn. She raised her two hands to beat upon the door. It occurred to her that if she did this she would probably split her gloves. She lowered her two hands.

"All right," she yelled, "stay and work and be damned. But I tell you what, Bisham!"

"What?" he called.

"I shall flirt like billy-oh with Captain Yarborough."

The door opened and Dunkle's nose appeared again. "You wouldn't do that, Chloë," he said hoarsely.

"I would," she assured him, "and what's more I will. *Now* are you coming?"

"Old geyser," he said brokenly, "I can't. Honest-to-blazes I can't. I've got to work. It's only for you I'm doing it, Chloë. You know how broke we are. If

I don't make some money soon we may have to go and live in a flat near Battersea Park. You don't want to have to go and do that, do you?"

"It isn't a question," she said, "of what I want to have to go and do; it's a question of what I want you to come and do and that's take me to Ranlingham. But, of course, if you prefer your old work——!"

"I don't prefer it, Chloë. You know that. You know there's nothing I like so much as to go around with you. But when it comes to keeping the wolf from the door, a man's pleasure has to give way to his duty. And remember, it's for you I'm doing it. *You'll* have the spending of this money I'm going to make. It's not as if I was doing it for anyone else, now, is it?"

"I see," she said coldly, "that your

mind's made up. Well, I'm a bit too wise to waste my time trying to get a man to do what he doesn't want to do. Stay and work, by all means; I leave you to your Muse. But, lord! how I shall flirt with the captain!"

With his hand he stifled a groan. "All I say is, it's dashed unkind of you, Chloë," he said. "That's all I say—it's dashed unkind of you. I don't say another word but that. What I mean, it's dashed unkind of you."

She had turned to leave him, but now she had a sudden thought and came back.

"And what," she inquired, "what might this precious work *be?*"

"Why, old knob," he said, "it might be addressing envelopes and it might be solving acrostics, but it isn't. As a matter of fact, I'm doing another burlesque novel on the lines of 'Trixie.' There's something

in the neighbourhood of seventy thousand quid waiting for me to pick up, and what I say is, why not? Why ever not?"

"Ah!" she said icily. "*Another* burlesque. Another *burlesque*, eh?"

"What do you mean, another burlesque, eh?" he retorted hotly. "Do you mean you don't believe 'Trixie' was one?"

"I don't think I want to tell you what I believe about 'Trixie,'" she said. "I only say that no one I know believes it to be a burlesque. I only say that. Nothing more. But I'll tell you this, Bisham. I was ready to allow you to publish one novel, seeing that it was, as you swore, a joke; but when it comes to your writing another, why, I find that a bit too thick. A reputable writer may be allowed one novel, if it's a pure *jeu d'esprit*; but a second one and in the same *genre*—no. That makes him a novelist,

and not only a novelist but a self-plagiarist, than which there is no more despicable creature. I warn you, Bisham, that if you publish another of these so-called burlesque novels of yours, I shall be forced to look upon you as a sort of Thomas Hardy, rooted eternally in Wessex, or a kind of Henry James, for ever occupied with the psychology of the Continental-American. I don't say that I will leave you, Bisham, for I should have nowhere to go except my father's house; but I'll be shot if I shall love you any longer, and I shall flirt like the devil with other men, and particularly with Captain Yarborough." She turned her back on him again and began to sweep down the hall.

He threw the door wide. "Come in," he said. "Rather than *that*, I'll give the Archdeacon away."

She halted as if she had been shot,

only she didn't fall down! She turned and, " What do you mean, give the Archdeacon away? " she asked.

He stared at her stupidly. " By heck! " he thought, " what *do* I mean by it? I mean absolutely nothing by it. That's what I mean. There's not the faintest reason why I shouldn't tell her. With 'Trixie' it was different. *Then* he didn't want it to be known. But now he *does* want it to be known. It's I that don't want it to be known, not for the present, at any rate. But, by hock! if I tell her, she'll blab it all over Ranlingham this afternoon, as sure as eggs. I mustn't." He slammed the door in his wife's face.

" Oh! " she hissed through the keyhole. " *How* I shall flirt with Captain Yarborough! "

He flung the door open again, caught her by the wrist and dragged her in to the study.

" I've said too much," he cried. " You've got to know all. You've got to. Look here ! " He haled her across the room to his desk and pointed to a thick pile of manuscript which lay on it. " Look at that. Whose writing is it ? "

She peered through her lorgnette. " It's father's," she said.

" Well," he shouted, " that's my new novel. He's just finished writing it."

" What do you mean, he's just finished writing it ? " she cried.

" I mean what I say. He's just finished writing it. He wrote ' Trixie,' do you hear ? Being an Archdeacon, it wouldn't have done for him to publish it under his own name. So I lent him mine. Like Bacon did for Shakespeare, do you see ? And now he's written this other one, and I'm copying it out to send to the publishers ! Do you understand me ? "

"Yes," she said, "I understand you, Bisham. But what I don't and can't understand is why you consented to this infamy!"

"I did it for you!" he howled. "My price was your father's consent to our marrying. What do you suppose I cared for my position in the world of letters, where *your* happiness was at stake? If I hadn't done this thing—this infamy, as you call it—you and I would still be only engaged; whereas——"

He broke off, for Chloë had fallen on his neck and a good deal of the heavy fur collar of her heavy fur coat had made its way into his open mouth.

"Oh, Bish!" she sobbed. "You did this for me! For me! *You* did! Oh, Bish! And to think that I believed you capable of writing a novel, even a burlesque one! Oh, Bish, can you forgive me?"

"Yes," he said, "that's quite all right, old chip, of course. You were bound to believe your husband, on your wedding-day, anyhow. It was inconceivable that I should lie to you on your wedding-day."

"Well, but——" she said, "you did, you know, Bish."

"Yes, I did, but only because I had to. I'd promised your father to let not a soul into his secret. I had to keep faith with your father, Chloë. Had he not just given you to me at the altar—at least, wouldn't he have done so if he hadn't had lumbago? But I owed you to him. I simply had to keep faith with him. On our wedding-day, at any rate. So you must just forgive me for deceiving you. And really, if anyone is to blame, it's the Archdeacon, because he tempted me in the first instance with the offer of your hand. And, of course, that was irresistible."

She smiled and patted his cheek. "A compliment," she said. "How prettily you can pay them when you like, Bish. But tell me, why are you breaking faith with the Archdeacon, now?"

He told her, then, of her father's resolution to avow his authorship of "Trixie." He told her how (finding himself incapable of producing any sort of fiction) he had got another novel out of the Archdeacon in exchange for his promise to avow his non-authorship of "Trixie." In fact, he told her all about it.

"But, as you can see for yourself, old pill," he concluded, "it's of the utmost importance that nothing should transpire until this new book, this 'Edgar and Lilian,' shall have been on the market for a few months. Launched as my work, it will sell of itself and run straight off into quarter-million figures. Then, d'ye see?

when it's well on its way to the half-million, we announce the Archdeacon as the author of both books and I confirm his claim. Sensation unparalleled since the invention of writing! The sales of 'Edgar and Lilian' bound up beyond the half-million in a week and on to the three-quarters in a month, and 'Trixie' takes an entirely new lease of life, and you and I are absolutely swamped in royalties.

"But if it leaks out now, when 'Trixie' is beginning to be forgotten and before 'Edgar and Lilian' is published, the sensation it'll produce will be a comparatively mild one, and the sales of 'Edgar and Lilian' will actually suffer. People are mad to read a book about which a sensation is going on; but if the sensation is over and done with, there's no particular reason for them to read the book. In fact, they'd rather *not* read it.

"So I want you to promise me to keep your thumb on all this until I say the word. Will you?"

"Yes," she said, "I promise, of course. You don't suppose I'm exactly eager to let people know that my father wrote 'Trixie,' now that I know it *wasn't* a burlesque. It was quite bad enough to have it attributed to my husband when I *believed* it to be a waggery. However, I suppose the disgrace has got to be met. From what you tell me, it's clear that the Archdeak means to confess?"

"Yes," said Dunkle, "he means that all right."

"Well," she said, "I wish we could stop it. It'll be a horrid scandal. It'll blow his chances of a bishopric sky high, and that'll just about break mamma's heart. She does so want to be a bishopess. I believe that, for her sake, we ought to

prevent the old gentleman from doing it. Look here, if you burn this manuscript after you've copied it, he'll have no evidence, will he?"

"Not a scrap!"

"Very well, then. And look here, Bish, if you can't write novels like 'Trixie,' I'll bet I can. Why not burn this 'Edgar and Lilian' thing and defy the Archdeak to prove he wrote it, and then let me write any more novels that may be wanted? You say the Archdeak is willing to let you have all the royalties on these two books as long as he has the fame of having written them. But will he go on like that? How can we be sure he won't turn greedy? Once he's known as the author of these books, he'll have no use for you any longer. Why should he let you have the royalties on the other books he'll write? Obviously he won't. But if we burn this manuscript,

we cut him right out of the game. You'll retain your reputation as the author of 'Trixie,' and I can, as I say, write your future books for you easily. I don't at all like the notion of the Archdeak grabbing all those royalties when we might be getting them. Of course, I see what a sensation we can make by owning up, and I see that it'll sell 'Edgar and Lilian' pretty heftily; but what I say is, let us take the long view. We've got a considerable time to live, I imagine, and every year we shall want more money. Well, as the author of 'Trixie,' I can make it as easy as shelling peas. But not if you've let the Archdeak acquire that valuable trade name."

"Chloë, old stub," said Dunkle, "it strikes me that you've degenerated a good deal in the last few minutes."

"Not at all," she said. "I'm only being frank about it now. Posing as a

despiser of fiction is all very well so long as it costs one nothing. But I'm not going to let the Archdeak lay his claws on any fifty thousand a year in royalties that I know I can persuade to come my way, particularly when by doing so he'll make my darling Mumsie unhappy. So take it from me, Bish, that when you've copied out this 'Edgar and Lilian' stuff the next thing you'll do is to put it on the fire; and I'm the lady who's going to stand by and see it done. And now," she concluded, "I must leave you to your task, you poor old lobster; but you can perform it with an easy mind. I shan't do any flirting with Captain Yarborough *this* afternoon. He may leer his damnedest and not so much as an œillade shall reward him for his trouble. My thought will be all for my Bishie."

"I suppose," he said, "you wouldn't

like to stay here and read your father out loud to me while I write him down? It would be the deuce of a help, Chloë."

"Not necessary, dear old tuft," she said. "There's no such blinking hurry as all that. If you stick to it, you'll get that pile all copied out in a fortnight or three weeks. But I'll help you when it comes to suppressing the evidence of the Archdeak's authorship. Yes, you can count on me there absolutely."

She kissed him on his parting and flitted down the hall. A moment, and the waiting Bournville was speeding with her in a westerly direction.

(2)

A fortnight later the Archdeacon received a bundle of fifty-three press cuttings, all couched in exactly the same language. They said: "Messrs. Capper and Ironsides

have just received from Mr. Bisham Dunkle the manuscript of his new novel, 'Edgar and Lilian.' All they need say about it is that it is better, if possible, than 'Trixie.' The first edition of a hundred and forty-five thousand will be published at the earliest possible moment."

Dunkle and Chloë dined that evening at the Vicarage. After dinner the Archdeacon, passing the port, said:

"Well, Bisham, I see that the new novel is in the hands of the publishers. So I'll be glad if you'll let me have my original manuscript back to-morrow. I must confess that I have a sort of sentimental attachment to that manuscript. I want to feel that after my death it may be treasured by my descendants, unless, of course, I decide to bequeath it to the Library of the British Museum."

"My goodness, Archdeacon!" said

Dunkle, "I wish you'd told me you wanted that manuscript back. For, do you know, I've burnt it. I'm awfully sorry, but we burnt the other, you'll remember, and I suppose I acted from force of habit. I was rather brain-weary after a fortnight's almost uninterrupted copying, and I suppose I didn't quite realise what I was doing. Why ever didn't you tell me you wanted the thing back? I shall never forgive myself for this."

The Archdeacon smiled indulgently. "Well, well," he said, "no matter. If it's burnt, it's burnt, and there's an end of it. But it's of no consequence, and you mustn't distress yourself, my dear boy. The thing would have come in rather handily, of course, in the event of your declining to keep your promise to admit my authorship of 'Trixie' and this new book, for I could have produced it

in support of my claim, eh? But of course——"

Dunkle's face darkened. "You needn't be afraid," he said stiffly. "I shan't let you down."

"My dear fellow," cried the Archdeacon, "you don't imagine I spoke seriously, I hope? If so, pray disabuse your mind of any such monstrous notion. I haven't the slightest doubt that you will keep faith with me. For let me tell you, Bisham that before giving you that manuscript to copy out, I made a copy of it in my own handwriting, and placed it in the Sloane Street Safe Deposit, sealed and dated and entered in the books of that institution. I have, therefore, irrefragable proof of my authorship of, at any rate, 'Edgar and Lilian,' and, since I can explode your claim to have written my second book, I do not believe that you will think

it worth your while to dispute my assertion, when I make it, that I wrote the first. In other words, I know that you will keep faith with me, because for you to do anything else will be futile." He leaned back in his chair, put his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat, spread his fingers wide and beamed benevolently upon his son-in-law.

There was a short silence. Dunkle was a gentleman, and it was a prime article of his social code never to swear in the presence of a clergyman. He held fast the barrier of his teeth against a whole regiment of curses, and presently was in command of himself.

"Why, Archdeacon," he said, "this is delightful news, and I can't tell you how it has relieved my mind. Another copy, you say? Splendid! Truly a most wise precaution. Here is proof of your author-

ship which must convince the most sceptical."

"Yes," said the Archdeacon, "isn't it?"

(3)

"Chloë," said Dunkle, as they drove away from the Vicarage in the Bournville limousine, "Chloë, my dear old root, I regret to inform you that your venerable father has this night shown himself to be the slimiest kind of a snake in the grass. A foxy old clerical if ever there was one —that's him. You wouldn't believe how far-sighted and execrable he's been. Now, listen," and he told her plainly what the Archdeacon had told him he had done.

Chloë screamed with rage. "What a vile mind he must have!" she exclaimed. "No one but a very evil old fellow would have thought of safeguarding himself in such a way. Show me a man who fears

treachery and I will show you a traitor; and father must be as treacherous as Judas Iscariot to have imagined that *you* could mean to do him down, Bish. Why, as you and I know perfectly well, nothing was farther from your thoughts than to deny his authorship. It was only because I don't want my mother to be worried and humiliated and disappointed that we burnt that manuscript of the Archdeak's and put it out of his power, as we thought, to dish his chances of wearing lawn sleeves. And all the time the old iniquity had got another script laid down in cold storage to back up his claim to be the author of 'Trixie.' Well, what I say is, it's not decent for a clergyman to be so sharp."

"That's all perfectly correct," said Dunkle, "but it doesn't get us any forrarder, old tick. What, for example, do you suggest we should do? It's quite

obvious that your father means to come out as the author of ' Trixie ' unless we can stop him. The point is, can we ? It's impossible for us to get that manuscript out of the Safe Deposit. Burgling's not a bit in my line, and we don't number a single cracksman among our acquaintances. From the only other alternative—murdering your father—I confess I shrink."

" No," she said, " there's another, a better way than that."

" What is it ? "

" To find out some dark secret of his past life, and threaten to put the police on him unless he chucks this idea of his."

" But," said Dunkle, " suppose he hasn't got any dark secret ? "

" You needn't tell me," said Chloë, " that a man of his age, with whiskers like his whiskers, hasn't got something in his past that he can't afford to have dug up

and brought into the light of day. Depend upon it, the Archdeak's tendon Achilles is no more invulnerable than anyone else's. I propose we put Hanky Pankhurst on his track to-morrow."

"Who's he?"

"He's the smartest private inquiry man in London," she explained. "He's the Questing Beast brought right down to date. There's not his equal for nosing out the buried indiscretions of the blameless. It's his speciality, in fact, though of course he does an immense business in connection with ordinary miserable sinners. We've only got to put Pankhurst on the Archdeak's trail, and it won't be much more than a couple of weeks before he roots up something that'll enable us to bring the old gentleman to his senses."

"I say, old scream," said Dunkle, "do you really believe that it'll be quite the

thing for you to start stirring up your own father's horrid past. What about decency and all that sort of rot?"

"Well," she said, "what about it? If it comes to that, I regard it as pretty indecent of a man in my father's position to want to announce himself as the author of a mushy Best Seller. A dignitary of the Church of England isn't free to act just as he pleases. He's got to remember that there are millions of people about who are only too ready to seize on anything that will discredit the Church of England—Atheists and Nonconformists and Bolshevists, and people like that. But what I'm principally thinking of is dear mother's disappointment if father goes and cuts himself out of the running for a bishopric. I say it'll be a worthy and righteous action, Bish, to prevent him from making an addled egg of himself like this, and how

we do it doesn't matter a monkey's damn."

"All right," said Dunkle with a sigh, "I expect you're right, and after all, he's *your* father. But here's our dancing hell."

Five minutes later they were taking the floor in Sismondi's Club.

CHAPTER X

NEXT morning they were early at the office of Mr. Pankhurst, which they found occupying the two lower floors of a fine old Georgian house in a square not far removed northwards from New Oxford Street; the two upper floors of this house formed the residence of the investigator. As they had made their appointment by telephone, they had not long to kick their heels among the dozen or more heavily-veiled women who affected to read the illustrated magazines in the clients' waiting-room. They had barely sat down and looked about them when their names were spoken by the factotum,

and a moment later they were ushered into the presence of his employer.

Mr. Pankhurst's age appeared to be something over sixty. He was bald, possibly from mental concentration, and obese probably from over-eating and lack of exercise. His voice was fruity, his manner obsequious, his smile that of a fat devil. He wore a light grey morning coat, a white piqué waistcoat, black and white check trousers, white spats, patent-leather shoes, purple socks, a purple tie with a big pink pearl in it, a neat little up-and-down collar, white with a thin black stripe, and a soft-fronted shirt to match, an undervest of pale blue silk and wool, pants ditto ditto, purple sock suspenders, a Jaeger ceinture, a bloodstone signet ring, and a porous plaster.

Chloë did the talking. "Mr. Pankhurst," she said, "I am the daughter of

Archdeacon Roach, and my husband here and I are in need of some kind of weapon against him. Do you think you can help us?"

"The Archdeacon of Cricklewood, isn't it?" inquired Mr. Pankhurst. "The other Archdeacon Roach, of Runcorn, has no daughter, I believe, madam, who is as young as you by several years."

Chloë shot a glance at Dunkle which said: "Didn't I tell you this fellow was some investigator? Do you mark, for example, how he knows not only that there are two Archdeacons Roach, but how old their respective daughters are? Did you know that there was an Archdeacon Roach of Runcorn? I'll be shot if I did."

"Yes," she replied, "my father is the Archdeacon of Cricklewood. How long do you think it'll take you, Mr. Pankhurst,

to find out something about him that's really disreputable? If possible, we'd like it to be something he can go to quod for. Of course we don't want to send him there, you understand? It's only a persuasion that we're looking for."

"I understand perfectly," said Mr. Pankhurst. "Yes, I perfectly understand. Now let me think. Hum! Hah! No, for the moment I can't recall what it is that we have against your excellent father, though I know we've a good deal. Suppose we turn him up." He blew into a tube and then spoke into it, saying: "Mr. Leprovitch, will you kindly bring me the dossier of Archdeacon Roach, of Cricklewood."

Then, turning to the Dunkles, he continued: "There is not a public man of any ordinary importance into whose history we have not made our inquiries. Since I

started this little business of mine, thirty years ago, I have accumulated data, of one sort or another, relative to not less than sixty-five thousand ladies and gentlemen of position and means. Not only does this save time when, as now, information is sought concerning one of them, but it gives my young men—my beagles, I call them, ha! ha!—something to do when they are not actually engaged upon any definite investigation. Moreover, while we are looking into the past history of A, it frequently happens that we light upon something to the discredit of B. This we instantly file for future reference. And so—but here comes Mr. Leprovitch with your father's record, madam. I make no doubt that in a moment I shall be in a position to give you some very material assistance."

The ghoulish little old clerk who had

made his appearance laid on Mr. Pankhurst's table a slim, green cardboard cover, upon which were neatly written the words, "Roach, Samson, Archdeacon of Cricklewood." This done, he bowed, sniffed and withdrew.

Mr. Pankhurst picked up the dossier and loosed its tapes. "Now then," he said, and allowed it to fall open in his palm.

Chloë rose quickly and peered over his shoulder. To her annoyance the papers she saw were all covered with, to her, wholly unintelligible scratches. So she sat down again. Mr. Pankhurst paid no attention to her movements. He was busy scanning the cipher record. There was a short silence, which Chloë employed in powdering her nose, Dunkle in scratching his.

At last Mr. Pankhurst cleared his throat once or twice, and: "I expect," he said,

"we'd best begin at the beginning. Perhaps Mrs. Dunkle will stop me when I come to anything that seems likely to be of service to her. Yes? Thank you. The first entry, then, runs as follows:

"Aged twenty-one, went to spend part of the Oxford Christmas Vacation at the home of a college friend, Bertram Saunderson, second son of Sir Assheton Saunderson, of 42, Onslow Gardens, South Kensington. While dancing was in progress, kissed Sir Assheton's third daughter, Lucy, who, after boxing his ears, immediately reported the matter to her brothers. Kicked by elder and thrown into the street, with his trunk and belongings, by the younger."

Chloë broke out into a shriek of laughter so piercing that even Dunkle, who was well used to the painful sounds she made, winced and put his hands up to his ears. As for Mr. Pankhurst, his teeth were set so horribly on edge that both plates sprang from their moorings and were only saved from dashing themselves to pieces on the

table by the spasmodic and fortunate catch which their wearer brought off.

"Oh," she cried, "but what a picture it makes! The Archdeak at twenty-one —his whiskers just sprouting—clad in his first swallow-tails and quite the conquering young Lothario—propelled (with trunk) through the front door of No. 42, Onslow Gardens, and pelted with his possessions, as he sits on the pavement, from an upper story window, by the brothers Saunderson, the outraged Lucy encouraging them from the drawing-room balcony, and all the dance-guests cheering madly at the descent of each article. *Ah, vieux satyr, je te connais enfin.* I always knew the Archdeak had been a bad lad in his day. But I'm afraid, Mr. Pankhurst," she went on, wiping her eyes, "that this won't quite do. We want something a bit tougher. Something that we can really frighten him with."

" Well," said Mr. Pankhurst, " suppose I just read on.

" Aged twenty-three, discovered attempting to smuggle six boxes of Dutch cigars into England at Harwich. Cigars confiscated and fine of two pounds ten shillings imposed.

" Aged twenty-seven, surprised with a penny on a wire, doing his best to empty of its chocolate an automatic machine on the deserted platform of Dentry Magna station. As his efforts had proved fruitless, was warned and let go ; but it cost him a sovereign to the Stationmaster and ten shillings to the porter.

" Aged thirty-two, tried to bilk a hanson cabman at the St. James's restaurant. Cabman, having his suspicions, drove rapidly round Piccadilly through Air Street, and was just in time to be the witness of his fare's appearance on the pavement of Regent Street. Five pounds accepted in compositon of this misdemeanour.

" Aged thirty-nine, while staying at the Hotel Beau Rivage et Belle Vue, Clarens, Switzerland, was required by the management to open his trunk, wherein 503 sheets and 479 envelopes of the hotel letter-paper were discovered. No action taken by the Management. but Mr. Roach required to shift his quarters without delay.

" Aged forty-one, found travelling first-class with a third-class ticket on the Great Western Railway

between Pangbourne and Paddington. Gave false name and address, and so escaped the consequences of his offence."

"'Nuff said," cried Chloë. "'Nuff said, Mr. Pankhurst. We needn't go any further. That puts him on toast for us, all right. What we required was something for which he's wanted, and here we have it. I suppose you can produce proof of this shocking business if necessary?"

"Of course," said Mr. Pankhurst. "Nothing goes on our registers unless it can be proved up to the hilt. I see that the employee of my agency who happened to be travelling in the Archdeacon's carriage and tracked him home is dead, but we have his statutory declaration relative to the affair, made in the ordinary course of his duties after handing in his report to us. So you think this will suit you?"

"Absolutely. We have him right bang

on his blessed old archidiaconal hip. Why if you'd told me that he was a bigamist, I couldn't be better pleased. This is just the kind of mean little pettifogging offence that kills a man stone dead, socially, if it comes out. He'll never let it come out. Never in this world, he won't. He'd rather have to own to embezzlement of the diocesan funds than to this."

"Yes," said Dunkle, "or to melting down his church candlesticks."

They paid their fee and departed, with hearts a good deal lighter than those they had brought with them.

CHAPTER XI

(1)

THE printing and binding of "Edgar and Lilian" took two months to get itself done. The book was subscribed to the tune of one hundred and twenty-seven thousand in Great Britain alone. In America the figures baffled all computation. The sales on publication—but enough of these dry business details. Suffice it that "Edgar and Lilian" was quite a success.

As in the case of "Trixie," the reviews were mostly favourable, and there was an immense number of them. The Archdeacon had his work cut out to read them

all and paste those which pleased him into their albums. Dunkle was hunted off his legs. Invitations poured in upon him—to lunch, dine, and sup with perfect strangers; to address the Literary Societies of Polytechnic Institutions; to be the guest of the Fulle Jugges, of the Adullamites, of the Tupper Club and other festive societies; to give away the prizes at academies for the sons of gentlemen; to kick off in charity football matches; to lay foundation-stones; to open bazaars and swimming-baths; to pay their rent for unsuccessful writers, painters, sculptors, musicians, tailors; to take shares in cinematograph palaces; to borrow anything from £1 to £100,000 on his sole note of hand; to be photographed gratis; to become the husband of unknown women; to stand for Parliament; to lecture in America; to appear on the programmes of

music-halls; to buy out-of-date Encyclopædias Britannicas; to subscribe to mumps hospitals, testimonials to retiring pugilists, monuments to philanthropists, missions to ploughmen, cats' homes, brass bands, Societies for the Discouragement of Fiction Reading; to take tickets for lotteries in Denmark, Austria, Rumania, Mesopotamia, Spitzbergen; to finance actors in Shakespearean Seasons; to contribute articles for nothing to publishers' advertisement-sheets; to breakfast in Downing Street; to allow books to be dedicated to him and then to buy half a dozen copies of them; to accept (and write testimonials to the virtues of) fountain pens, ever-sharp pencils, loose-leaf notebooks, safety razors, strops, shaving-soaps, corn-cures, boot-polishes, corrugated-iron summer-houses, photographic cameras, player-pianos, ice-cream freezers, bicycles, cork jackets,

tinned soups, baseball bats, shampoo powders, sardines, vacuum cleaners, Virginian cigarettes, hair dyes; to join the boards of limited liability companies; to send copies of his works to the Library of the Seventh Particular Presbyterian Church of Running Horse, Wy.; to write his signature upon stamped photo-card enclosed and oblige and return; to allow publishers other than Messrs. Capper and Ironsides to handle him; and so on.

To none of these invitations did Dunkle reply, but he sent them all along to the Vicarage with his compliments. Then the Archdeacon would sit down at his desk and write: "The Author of 'Trixie' regrets that, owing to pressure of engagements, he is unable to accept the kind invitation of——," etc., or "The Author of 'Trixie' thanks Messrs. Lomax for the handsome gift of their patent braces (to hand this

morning) and begs to say that he finds them not only exceptionally comfortable, but durable to the highest degree," or "The Author of 'Trixie' has pleasure in sending herewith to the Librarian of the Seventh Presbyterian——," etc., or "The Author of 'Trixie,' while he sincerely sympathises with Mr. Soup in his embarrassments (which he, the A. of T., trusts may prove of quite short duration), is unfortunately compelled by the other many and imperative calls which are made upon his purse to deny himself the satisfaction of——" etc.

The Archdeacon loved writing these letters. Every time his pen traced the words "The Author of 'Trixie'" he thrilled to reflect that in but a few short weeks there would no longer be any need for him to practise such concealment. Now and then he could not resist the temptation to write, "Mr. Samson Roach regrets"

or "has pleasure" or whatever the case might require; but he was always alert to burn these letters the moment they were completed. No untimely whispers must be allowed to lessen the effect of the surprise he was hatching for the public.

Since it was obviously out of the question for him to employ his secretary upon this work (even had he been willing to delegate so sweet an occupation to another), and since he was therefore compelled to hold himself to it for several hours each day, and behind locked doors too, he announced that he was once more busy with his Commentaries. Yes, so hardened in deceit was he by now that he did not even trouble to invent a new lie for his innocent family to swallow. Such conduct can only be characterised as cynical.

All these letters that he was writing were a great embarrassment to him because he

could not put them on the hall table, for the maid to take out to the pillar-box, lest their number should dangerously excite the curiosity of his household, and he was obliged to carry them out to the post himself. This he did, generally, late at night, sneaking forth in his pumps what time the Vicarage was sunk in slumber ; or he would smuggle them out by day in his silk hat, ten at a time, when he went upon his affairs parochial or archidiaconal.

Thus, happily pondering and gumming in his press-notices, reading and answering his correspondence, he passed his leisure hours during the first month or six weeks subsequent to the publication of "Edgar and Lilian."

It had been agreed (you may remember) that not until the book had enjoyed a sale of three months should the name of its true author be divulged, but ere half that

time had gone by further waiting had become intolerable to the Archdeacon. The Artist within him might no longer be denied.

My dear Bisham, he accordingly wrote. *What good purpose is to be served by postponing any longer that which we intend to do? Will you and dear Chloë give me luncheon to-morrow, and afterwards you and I can settle just how our disclosure is to be immediately made.*

Affectionately,

Samson Roach.

(2)

Next morning, Dunkle, on receipt of this note, took it into his wife's bedroom. He found her in the middle of her third cigarette since the half-dozen of aspirin tablets washed down with black coffee, on which, as was her wont, she had breakfasted. On her head was a boudoir cap

composed of pink and black ribbons, sequins, old point lace, artificial roses, jet bugles, imitation pearls and swansdown. She wore also a bed jacket of ermine and a complexion mask of white kid. The pedicure, Mrs. Hugshooter, was busy polishing the little-toe-nail of her client's left foot. The while, the horrible old woman exuded scandal.

Dunkle gave the Archdeacon's note to his wife in silence. She read it at a glance and said: "Hug, old pet, hop it for ten minutes, will you?" When they were alone, "This," she continued, "is what I've rather been expecting. I never believed he'd be able to stay the three months. But the fact is, the sooner we have our little chat with him the better. Now that he's set his heart on immediate confession, every minute is dangerous. We don't want to have him confiding his dreadful

secret to the Athenæum smoking-room through sheer inability to hold it in any longer. So ring him up, Bish, and tell him we expect him here at 1.30 to-day."

"You really mean to put pressure on him? I mean about that railway-ticket, you know?"

"Well," she said, "what do *you* think?"

"Chloë, old stitch," he said, "I don't like it; I really don't. One ought to draw the line somewhere, even nowadays. You can't give your own father into custody on a charge of diddling the Great Western. It's simply not done."

"Who's going to give him in charge, you mug?" she demanded. "Not me! You don't suppose I'm exactly panting to proclaim myself the daughter of a swindler. But I imagine I can threaten him, can't I?"

"Oh well, if you only mean to threaten. But suppose he calls your bluff."

"He won't," she said. "I know him. And what's more, he knows me. I can always bluff the Archdeak. You see, one day, when I was twelve, I asked him to give me a bicycle and he refused; so I told him he would be sorry if he didn't do as I asked. I spoke in a peculiar kind of voice I'd invented, and now, whenever I threaten him, I always use it, so that he may remember and be wise."

"What did you do?" Dunkle asked.

"Well, the P.M. was dining with us that night, so just before dinner I emptied a bottle of red ink into the poor old Archdeak's port decanter, and he missed the bishopric he was after at the time by about fifty miles. Since then the Archdeak's been a little careful how he calls my bluffs. Depend upon it, we shall have no trouble

whatever with him this afternoon when I speak to him in that peculiar voice of mine. So pip off, laddie, and take an easy mind with you. And just bellow, will you? for that old thing Hug to come and get on with my tootsies."

CHAPTER XII

(1)

THE Archdeacon arrived for luncheon in good time and better temper. He made no sort of doubt that this was the last day of his sojourn in the purgatory of non-recognition. In his pocket were a number of copies of a letter which he proposed to send, signed by Dunkle and himself, to the Editors of *The Times*, *The Morning Post*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Express*, *The Westminster Gazette*, and some fifty more periodicals of daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly appearance. It read as follows :

Dear Sir,

We, the undersigned, beg to inform you that "Trixie" and "Edgar and Lilian" were both written wholly by the first of us and that the second of us did nothing but lend his name (for reasons which need not be specified) to the two works in question.

(*Signed*) *Samson Roach,*
Bisham Dunkle.

The Archdeacon was not a little proud of this composition. How short and to the point it was, he thought. How simple and intelligible! Not a superfluous word. Not an ambiguity anywhere. Was ever a piece of information so astonishing conveyed to the public with greater directness and economy of effort? He thought not. A statement, this, that he who ran might read and comprehend.

No sooner, accordingly, had the after-luncheon coffee been served and drunk than he rose and held the door open, saying; "Pray don't let us keep you, Chloë."

Chloë sat tight. She lit a new cigarette, inhaled smoke, leaned back in her chair and discharged a tenuous cloud. "That's all right, Pontifex," she said. "Resume your seat, my very dear and venerable sir. Far from making my exit here, this is where my big scene comes. Isn't it, Bish?"

"Yes, Archdeacon," said Dunkle. "We can't spare dear Chloë yet awhile."

The Archdeacon, looking rather like a fool, closed the door and returned to his seat at table. It was pretty plain to him that something was going to happen; something for which, while making his dispositions, he had not allowed; some-

thing, briefly, in the nature of a jar, and, judging from Chloë's smile, a nasty one. A cold feeling passed down his spine and one bead of perspiration started upon his brow.

"Now then, Chloë, old stunt," said Dunkle, and helped himself to port.

Chloë helped herself to whisky. "So it appears, father mine," she observed, "that the rôle of shrinking violet no longer charms you. Fame, and plenty of it, is what you're after now. Henceforth it's the limelight for you, eh?" She drank.

"She's in the know," said Dunkle simply. "I mean about those two novels of yours. I hope you don't mind."

"No," said the Archdeacon. "Why should I mind? To-morrow all the world will be, as you say, in the know."

"Wrong," said Chloë. "Hopelessly wrong, Venerable."

"I don't think so," said the Archdeacon. He spoke with some appearance of boldness, but his spirit quaked. That voice which Chloë had now adopted. He knew it well and it portended his discomfiture.

"You don't, eh?" she asked. "Why ever not?"

He turned his shoulder to her and hauled out his bunch of letters from his pocket. "Here, Bisham," he said, "are some letters which I propose you and I should sign and send to the Press. They state the facts quite shortly, quite simply and quite sufficiently. Perhaps we might sign them now, if you have your fountain pen on you."

Chloë got up slowly and came round the table to him. She took the packet of letters gently from his hand and put it in the fire. Paralysed, he watched her push them with the poker in among the red coals; saw them burst into bright flame;

heard her say, "We shan't need these"; perceived her returning to her chair.

"Now see here, dada," she said as she sat down, "stop looking like a shark that's missed its bite and just listen to me. You've got to understand, once and for all, that Bish and I strongly disapprove of what you want to do and that we don't mean to let you do it, comprenny? No, don't speak. It's not necessary. We're not interested in your point of view. I am, however, quite willing to tell you why we have adopted this attitude. You see, if you announce yourself as a popular novelist and establish your claim to be one it will play the very devil with your chances of advancement in the Church. No novelist-clergyman even became a Bishop yet, and a Bishop is what dear mother wants you to be. You know as well as I do that she's set her heart right on it, ever

since that fortune-teller at Harrogate told her that he saw a palace in her tea-leaves. Well, I'm not going to have you disappoint mother if I can help it. I don't pretend that I'm exorbitantly fond of her, but she's not half a bad old soul and I don't care to see her vexed. So what you've got to do, my jolly old hierophant, is to concentrate on the next rung upwards of the ladder of ecclesiastical preferment and put out of your mind all thoughts of claiming public recognition for your talents as a novelizer."

The Archdeacon leaned his head on his hand and stared downwards upon the cloth.

"I've thought of all this, Chloë," he said brokenly. "It's not lightly that I've come to this resolution to announce myself as the author of these two books. I realise perfectly that to do so will be to

commit suicide, so far as preferment is concerned. I know perfectly well that it will grieve your dear mother dreadfully. I am aware that it will cause a grave scandal in the Church at a moment when grave scandals in the Church are peculiarly to be deplored. But I can only say that this thing is stronger than myself. I cannot, I simply cannot continue this deception. I won't pretend to you, as I once tried to pretend to Bisham, that it is my conscience that troubles me. It isn't. It's simply that I can't stand having Bisham praised for what *I* have made. I can't stand seeing his photograph in the magazines, when I know that it ought to be mine. I can't stand having him entertained by literary dining clubs, who ought to be entertaining me. I can't stand hearing people say what a clever fellow he is, when it's *I* that am the clever fellow.

I know that I'm foolish, mad, cruel, wicked if you please, but I can't help it. Your mother must bear her disappointment as best she can; the Church must survive this scandal or succumb to it; all I know is that I have got to have the fame which is my due and that have it I will!"

"I understand," Chloë said presently, "that you've got another manuscript of 'Edgar and Lilian' and that if Bisham denies your authorship you mean to bring this thing out in proof of your claim."

"To do so," said her father, "is my settled resolve."

"All right," she said, "then I'll tell you what *I'll* do. I'll——" And she told him.

(2)

"And now, my dear father," she concluded, "now that you know what's in

store for you if you go ahead with this scheme of yours, what do you decide? Is it to be war, or is it to be peace? Are you in one breath to be acclaimed author of 'Trixie' by an astounded (and largely offended) universe, and in the next to be hissed off the scene for a common and rather foolish kind of dirty swindler; or are you to keep your mouth shut and continue to enjoy the esteem and confidence of the British public, with the strong probability of finding yourself made a bishop within the next couple of years? Speak, old sir, and that right quickly."

The Archdeacon passed his hand across his eyes. "I can't guess, Chloë," he said in a dull voice, "how you found out about that miserable affair of the third-class ticket, but I am not going to deny your accusation. Nor need I say very much in

defence of my conduct. I will only say this. To have given my real name and address would have been to ensure the appearance of a Canon (as I was at that time) of the Church of England in the dock of a police court and it was most clearly my duty to prevent, by any means in my power, the occurrence of a catastrophe so unedifying. A clergyman who gets himself into a false position must always bear in mind the fact that he is a member of a body the maintenance of whose good fame is of inappreciable importance to mankind. It is surely more to be desired that one clerk in holy orders should fail to purge his individual offence than that the cloth he wears should be brought into disrepute. He who, in such circumstances, boldly takes a falsehood upon his conscience does well, Chloë, and not ill. But why should I waste my time and breath in self-justification? It is not

as if I either wished or hoped to deflect you from your unfilial purpose. For the truth is, my dear child, that I don't care a button what you do if only I can satisfy this awful craving to be recognised by the world as the veritable author of 'Trixie.' Besides, I don't believe that you'll do what you threaten."

Dunkle knocked the ash off his cigar. "He's called your bluff, old hoot," he said to his wife.

"Bluff be boiled!" she responded. "He'll jolly soon find out that it's no bluff. He needn't imagine that because he's my father I'm going to spare him. The fact that I'm his daughter doesn't seem to suggest to him that he should spare *me*. If he puts me to the everlasting shame of being known as the child of the man who wrote 'Trixie,' why should I hesitate to give him away to the Great Western? I

suppose," she went on to the Archdeacon, "it's useless for me to appeal to you on my mother's account. They'll point her out as the wife of a swindler; but *you* won't care, will you?"

"I shall care very much," said the Archdeacon. "It is very, very far from my wish to grieve your dear mother; but, as I've told you, this thing is stronger than myself and, be the consequences what they may, whether to me or to others, this announcement must be made, and immediately. I simply cannot remain unknown any longer. And so, if Bisham will not join me in making a statement, I must do it alone and, dispensing with his corroboration, rely upon that of my second manuscript. It will be convincing. I shall invite the Secretary of the Incorporated Society of Authors to be present with a small *ad hoc* committee, named by him,

when I open the parcel at the Sloane Street Safe Deposit."

He rose. "To-morrow," he said, "I shall write to the newspapers. I will give you, Bisham, twenty-four hours in which to make up your mind whether or no you are to stand by me. I cannot think that you will refuse."

He passed through the dining-room door.

"Twenty-four hours, eh?" said Chloë thoughtfully. "Well, twenty-four hours are always twenty-four hours."

"Yes," said Dunkle. "Always. But what's to be done? Has it got to be murder after all?"

"No," she replied. "Not that, Bish. It would mean my going into mourning just as I've laid in my whole spring wardrobe, and that I decline absolutely to do. We must think of something a trifle less drastic than doing the old gent in. Suppose

you pop off to the club for the afternoon and leave me alone to hatch out a scheme. If I want you, I'll telephone; and, if you care to be a perfect darling, you'll fetch a couple of pounds of nutty chocolates home with you. I'm right out of goodies."

(3)

After Dunkle had gone Chloë betook herself to her boudoir, where she loosened her stays, lit her hookah, and stretched herself at her ease among the yielding cushions of her Westmorland.

"The problem," she reflected, "can be simply stated. How, within the next twenty-four hours, is the Venerable to be dissuaded from carrying out his programme? Since my threat of handing him over to justice doesn't seem to be going to work—for I don't fancy he was bluffing when he defied me to do my worst—it's pretty

evident that nothing either Bish or I can *say* will have any effect on him. It remains for us to *do*. But what? To act. But how?

"We might have him certified insane and put away, but there's hardly time for that. Besides, I don't know any venal doctors. I fancy, moreover, that it's not as easy nowadays as it used to be during the reign of Queen Victoria. I've a sort of idea that private lunatic asylums aren't allowed any longer. To burgle the safe deposit for that manuscript, again, is quite a hopeless plan. Yet if we could get hold of the manuscript and burn it, the Archdeak wouldn't have a leg to stand on. He could never hope to make out his case without that bundle of paper. There's not a soul alive who'd accept his story. On the face of it, it's simply crazy. We could have him behind bars in half an hour. But so long

as he can produce the manuscript he has us on toast. If we could only get him to take the thing out of the safe deposit, we might be able to lay hands on it and abolish it. But what's going to make or persuade him to take it out? Nothing short of torture."

At this moment a barrel-organ, outside the house, struck up the air of a song which Chloë knew well. She had sung the words of its chorus a thousand times while threading the mazes of the seven step. And now, from force of habit, she began to sing them yet again. They were:

Oh! Way down by the Yang-tse-Kiang,
That's where she dwells, my own little China girl,
My own baby China Girl,
With her eyes so blue
And true.
You never, never, never saw a finer Girl.
For her cunning name is Wei-hai-wei.
Sweet little almond blossom
Of Shanghai.

As she pronounced the last word of this last word in jazz band minstrelsy she rose suddenly into a sitting posture and slapped her forehead with her open left hand. And, "Hah and ho!" she cried. "Likewise whoop and eureka!" She bounded from the Westmorland and a moment later she was talking to her father by telephone.

"That you, parent?" she cried. "Good! Well, it's just to tell you that Bisham and I surrender. You shall have it as you want it and Bisham will sign that letter to the press. So will you make out another fifty copies of it this afternoon and bring them round here to Grosvenor Street after dinner to-night—say about nine. No, we won't dine with you, thanks. We've got some blokes and maidens dining and dancing here, you see. But Bisham will be able to take half an hour off from doing the politeful in order to sign those letters with

you in the study, and then you can post them as you go home. Is that all right, then? Yes? Good! Give my love to mother and the girls." She rang off and at once called up the Aspidistra Club (Dunkle had been expelled from the Bards' upon the publication of "Trixie,") and commanded the porter to send her husband home the moment he put in an appearance.

CHAPTER XIII

(1)

THE Archdeacon spent the afternoon at his desk, making copy after copy of his proposed letter to the newspapers. As he worked he whistled, for he was very happy. "To-morrow," he kept telling himself, "I shall wake up to find myself famous; that is to say, if I can only go on sleeping until the first editions of the evening newspapers are out. The reporters ought to be round here by eleven at latest. I'd better arrange for a spread of cocktails and sandwiches in the dining-room. Cigars also. An author should neglect nothing that can help him to a good Press. When

I've got these letters done I must rough out something for the journalists on 'How "Trixie" came to me,' or 'What it feels like to Emerge,' or 'Should Archdeacons write novels?' They'll want to photograph me, of course. I'd better be done here at my desk, like this——" he cupped his chin in his left palm, and gazed soulfully upwards—" or like this——" he leant back in his chair, folded his arms, stuck a pipe in his mouth and adopted a frown of intense concentration—" or like this"—he seized a pen, put a finger to his brow and assumed the attitude of one who writes—" or like this"—he took a copy of "Trixie" in his left hand and a copy of "Edgar and Lilian" in his right, and held them up, one on each side of his grinning face, so that their titles were plainly visible.

"And," he went on, "how about sending this fountain pen of mine, this Pirene, to

its makers, accompanied by a letter to say that I wrote ' Trixie ' with it. To be sure, I didn't, for that one is lost, but what odds ? No one'll know, and the Pirene people will be sure to make a feature of it in their advertisements. The pen that wrote ' Trixie ' ! Archdeacon Roach, the world famous author, writes : ' I send you herewith the dear old Pirene with which I wrote every word of " Trixie." It costs me rather a pang to part with it, but I feel that you ought, etc., etc.' Something like that. With an enlarged photograph of the pen, or better still of my hand, holding it."

Thus, while he pursued the almost mechanical business of multiplying his and Dunkle's letter, the Archdeacon permitted his thoughts to occupy themselves rosily with the future. During the afternoon he struck out scores of happy ideas for the furtherance and consolidation of

his celebrity. Many—nay, most of them he jotted down in a little book which he always carried about with him, a little book which he had hitherto used for noting such subjects for sermons as, from time to time, occurred to him.

(2)

He finished his letters. Then he told his wife and daughters that he was summoned to the bedside of a dying parishioner and that as the person in question was at her country house near Marlow, he might not be back till late at night. This was a purely gratuitous lie. There was not the slightest reason why he should conceal from his family that he was to dine with the Dunkles. But it had begun to amuse him to tell lies to his family.

Then he hurried to the Athenæum Club where he dined grossly and extravagantly,

drinking champagne wine and Napoleon brandy and smoking a ten-shilling cigar afterwards.

As some of the clocks were striking nine he reached the door of Chloë's house in Grosvenor Street.

Across the blinds of the drawing-room windows a procession of coupled shadows was rapidly passing, and upon several musical instruments a tremendous rhythmical noise was being made. Every now and then it was punctuated by a howl of laughter, a scream of anguish or a bellow of rage. Somebody was also, at irregular intervals, bursting a motor-tyre, springing a rattle, banging a tin can with a poker, sounding a klaxon, ringing the bell of a fire engine, throwing down a tray-load of crockery, pulling the string of a steam siren and touching off a mine of high explosive. The Archdeacon remembered

that Chloë had said they were to have some friends in for dancing.

He was admitted and ushered straight into Dunkle's so-called study. Presently Chloë came in. " Ah ! " she said brightly, " here's the Famous Hauthor. Bisham'll be down in a moment to sign those letters which I see bulging out your breast pocket. What'll you have ? Whisky ? Right. Take a pew while I mix you one." She went over to a table on which stood a tantalus and some tumblers, while the Archdeacon sank into a vast arm-chair and stretched out his toes to the fire.

" Don't drown it, dear child," he said.

She brought him his refreshment. In her other hand was one for herself. This she raised to the level of her eyes. " I give you," she said, " homage to The Author of ' Trixie ' and no heel taps." She drank

out her glass and the Archdeacon, fatuously smiling, copied her example.

"Thank you, my love," he said. "Thank you very much. I hope you won't mind my saying how wise I think you and Bisham have been to accept the inevitable annorrocompelmiroo——" The glass dropped from his hand; his head fell backwards; his jaws opened; his eyes closed; he began to breathe stentorously.

At the same moment the door opened and Dunkle came in. "Well, Archdeacon," he began cheerfully, but broke off at once as his eyes assured him that anything he might say to their guest would be wasted.

"By jelly!" he said, "you've lost no time, old tub."

"No," said Chloë, "I've no time to lose. I want to dance. That knock-out drop I've administered will keep him quiet for a good eight hours, that is to say till

five to-morrow morning. When the boys and girls have gone we can deal with him in such further fashion as may be necessary and requisite. Come on." She took her husband's arm and, after extinguishing the lights, drew him out of the room. She locked the door on the outside and slipped the key into her garter-pocket. Then she and Dunkle went upstairs to rejoin their guests.

CHAPTER XIV

(1)

THE Archdeacon came to himself in pitch and stuffy darkness. He had such a headache as he had not supposed to be possible. In his mouth was as it were the bitterness of death ; his tongue felt not less than eighteen times its usual size, his throat as hot as Hades' High Street. He tried to put up a hand to his forehead. He couldn't, for his arms were bound closely to his sides. His legs too were shackled at the knees and ankles. He tried to call out, but all he achieved was a whining groan, for a gag was fast between his teeth.

The darkness into which he glared was pierced by a thin strip of very faint light. It widened until it became an oblong the size and shape of a door. Across it two figures stepped and darkness was again complete. But not for long. A beam of yellow light flashed out. Evidently that of an electric torch. It advanced and came to rest upon the Archdeacon. Then a woman's voice spoke. In it the Archdeacon with a feeling of absolute consternation, recognised the voice of his daughter Chloë.

"Good morning, Venerable," she said. "How goes it?"

The Archdeacon said no word. His mouth was too full for speech.

"Bish," said Chloë. "Take the gag out, will you? But first let me tell you, father, that you'll do yourself no good by giving tongue. No one can hear you, or

if they do they won't pay any heed. For where do you suppose you are? Why, in Rotherhithe, safe in the deepest dungeon, that is to say, cellar, of Mr. Richard Byles's Seamen's Employment Agency, otherwise known as Dirty Dick's Crimping-house. Above our heads the Thames is flowing at this moment. When it ebbs, you will, unless you're a good boy—but I anticipate. Bisham, unmuzzle the gent and, if he calls out, kick him in the ribs for all you're worth. Because he can't make himself heard beyond these walls is no reason why he should be allowed to deafen us."

Her companion (who was vaguely recognisable as the erstwhile poet Dunkle) removed the gag and gave the Archdeacon a little weak brandy and water in the silver cup of a flask which he produced from his hip pocket.

"So!" said Chloë. "We can now converse." She pulled a packing-case out of a corner of the cellar and sat down on it. Dunkle remained standing beside the Archdeacon ready to drive the toe of his boot into the unfortunate clergyman's side, should this become necessary.

(2)

By now the Archdeacon's eyes had become accustomed to the illumination which the electric torch provided. It was not powerful but it sufficed to show him that he was in a windowless room about twelve feet square, the walls of which were of white-washed brick, while its floor was of cement. In one corner was piled a heap of wine cases, hampers, soap-boxes, biscuit-tins, bottles and other rubbish, and this was all the furniture.

He perceived, further, that Chloë was dressed in some very rough-looking clothes —a plaid shawl, a blue apron and a coarse skirt of yellow tweed. On her head was a man's cap. Dunkle's costume was to match. He had a birds-eye scarf round his throat, a jacket and trousers of shiny black twill and a black slouch hat three or four sizes too small for him.

"I see, father," said Chloë, "that you're admiring our togs and I dare say you're wondering why we are wearing them. A moment's reflection will show you that it would be out of the question for us to come down into Rotherhithe sporting the garments of Mayfair. In these duds, however, we are sufficiently inconspicuous, and we never put on anything else when we come East. To smoke opium, you know," she added carelessly as she lit a cigarette which she took from behind her left ear.

"This," said the Archdeacon, in a hollow voice, "is a hideous dream. It must be. I shall wake up presently in my own bed."

"Not you," said Chloë. "The next place you'll wake up in, unless you listen to reason, will be the hold of a whaler."

"A what?" cried her father. "A whale?"

Chloë squeaked a laugh. "No," she said, "you're not cast to play Jonah, your Reverence. I said a whaler. A ship, ye ken. She sails to-night on the ebb, and she'll be away three years, not less. We've booked a berth for you in the fo'c'sle under the name of Edgar Trix. Captain Buggins is expecting you in half an hour's time. Whether you join up or no depends entirely on yourself. I suppose you understand what I mean."

"I confess, Chloë," said the Archdeacon, "that I am too utterly overwhelmed by

horror to understand anything whatever. I simply cannot believe that all this is happening. If I am not dreaming, I am the victim of an hallucination ; I am stark mad. It is impossible that my own child should be——"

"It's a wise father," Chloë interrupted, "who knows what it's impossible for his own child to do. Take it from me, sir, your senses deceive you in nothing. You sail to-night in the good ship *Lizzie Packer* and on a three years' cruise, unless you renounce this heartless folly of proclaiming yourself the author of poor dear Bisham's two novels."

"Ah!" said the Archdeacon slowly, "I see."

"Capital!" said Chloë. "Well, what do you say?"

"Why, Chloë," said her father, "I say that if you hadn't given me quite such a

headache with that naughty drug of yours it would be a most excellent joke. Ha ha! Very amusing indeed! I'd no idea you were such an actress, my child. But don't you think the game's gone on long enough now? I am very uncomfortable lying here tied up on the hard floor and——"

"Oh, fish!" she said. "This isn't a novel by the Author of 'Trixie.' Stop talking all this conventional tripe about hideous dreams and excellent jokes and realise that you're up against The Thing That Is."

"But," he gasped, "it can't be. It simply can't! My daughter send me, her own father and an Archdeacon of the Church of England, to sea in a whale ship for three years! No, no. It's not credible. I won't hear of it. Such things aren't done."

"What maddens me about you, father"

said Chloë, "is that you're so dreadfully behind the times. You're still living under Queen Victoria, in the dear absurd old days when children were supposed to love and respect their parents because they *were* their parents. Could anything be more fantastic? What a reason for loving anybody—that he conspired to bring one into the world! You are, of course, to me, as a modern daughter, nothing but an elderly man in whose house I happen to have been brought up. Had you treated me nicely I dare say I might like you well enough; but since you have always behaved odiously towards me and since I apprehend that you are likely seriously to diminish my future income, I see no reason why I shouldn't act towards you as I should towards any other person whom I detest and fear. So what do I do? Why, I give you a dose and lock you up in Bisham's study. Then

I put on my hat and trot round to Regent Street, where I find little Ching Foo, my cocaine merchant, on his pitch at the Vigo Street corner. I tell him what I want done and an hour later he arrives in a motor-van and we all jolt off here to Dirty Dick's together. Meanwhile the arrangements for shanghaiing you have been completed, and these, unless you throw in the towel, will be carried out at once. I need hardly tell you that a man of your age and luxurious habits cannot reasonably expect to survive the experiences which await you in the South Pacific and elsewhere. But of course you may. We must, at any rate, hope hard for the best. Mustn't we, Bish ? "

" Certainly," said Dunkle.

" Fatal girl," groaned the Archdeacon. " What do you require of me ? "

" Before we come to that," said Chloë, " let me tell you something that you ought

to know. The Bishop of Pontefract is dead and they have offered you his job. Mother telephoned the good news just as Ching Foo and Bisham were putting you in the van. It was the P.M. telephoned to the Vicarage. As you weren't in, he's given you till midday to let him know if you accept or not. So you see, if you agree to wash out your authorship of those two books, you not only needn't go whaling, but you can be a bishop into the bargain. On the other hand, refuse our demands and it's into the fo'c'sle of the *Lizzie Packer* for yours, old gentleman, and ta-ta for ever to those big transparent sleeves."

"Tell me," said the Archdeacon hoarsely, "what it is you want me to do? Tell me at once."

"Why," she said, "it's of the simplest. Give Bisham here your key to your locker in that Safe Deposit and your authorisation

in writing to use it. He goes there at once and abstracts that copy of 'Edgar and Lilian,' burns it and comes back here to say so. Then we take you out of this, pay Dirty Dick his charges for our accommodation and hop it west in the first taxi we strike. You ring up the P.M. and tell him you're on for Pontefract. He says 'Right ho!' and makes out your certificate. In due course you're sworn in and mother's made happy. As for those two novels, well—you'll soon come to believe that you only dreamt you wrote them. I'm sure you will. Won't he, Bisham?"

"Of course," said Dunkle.

"All you've got to do," Chloë went on, "is to say to yourself a hundred times, every morning while you shave, 'I only dreamt that I wrote those two novels,' and as sure as eggs you'll believe it in a couple of weeks. Then at night, when you're doing

your abdominal exercises, you must say to yourself, 'I don't give a hoot for literary fame.' Say it a hundred times *per noctem* for a month, and I'll wager my reputation you'll believe it. Won't he, Bisham?"

"Certainly," said her husband.

"So," she concluded, "all you have to do is hand over that key and write out that authorisation and in the same moment your troubles are at an end."

"Well," said the Archdeacon, "I accept your terms. I'd rather be a famous novelist than a bishop any day, but I'd rather be a bishop than go cruising after spermaceti. I admit you've done me down, Chloë. You've been too many for the poor old dad. So won't you untie me now and shan't we be going?"

"You forget," she said, "that little matter of the key."

"Oh!" said the Archdeacon grinning,

"there isn't any key, you know. All that about the deposited extra manuscript is just a little fairy-tale I made up. You see, after I'd handed over the manuscript of 'Edgar and Lilian' to Bisham, it occurred to me that he might burn it, so as to prevent me from having any evidence of having written the book. It was too late of course to get it back and make the copy I ought to have made before letting it go out of my possession; so I did the next best thing, viz:—told him that I had a copy banked in the Sloane Street Deposit. It worked too. You both swallowed the tale, but there wasn't a single word of truth in it from beginning to end."

"Indeed?" Chloë screamed passionately. "Then let me tell you, you horrible old liar, that there's not a single word of truth from beginning to end of my story that they've offered you the Bishopric of

Pontefract. I made it up as an additional inducement to you to be sensible. And there isn't a single word of truth, either, from beginning to end of my story about taking you to Dirty Dick's at Rotherhithe, or about that Chinaman or that whaling voyage or anything else. If you care to know, you are, at this moment, in the cellars of Bisham's and my house in Grosvenor Street, where you've been lying since Bish and I hauled you down here at two o'clock this morning, when our little dance ended. It's now a quarter past five and I should recommend you to make your way back to Kensington as quick as you can. If you're quiet you can let yourself into the Vicarage and get to your bed and no one there need so much as suspect that you've been out all night. And let me tell you," she went on as she and Dunkle began hastily to untie his fastenings, "let

me tell you that if you *should* be so ill-advised as to make any move to claim the credit of having written 'Trixie' and your other story, Bisham will fight you to the House of Lords, if they've not put you in an asylum before you get there. Won't you, Bish?"

"I believe you," said Dunkle.

CHAPTER XV

(1)

THE Archdeacon got home about a quarter to six. He let himself softly into the Vicarage, but not softly enough to cheat the vigilance of Mrs. Roach's ear. Even as he arrived on the first landing her bedroom door opened and she peered out saying, "Is that you, Samson? You're very late. And how did you leave dear Lady Lampeter?"

He spun her some lies about the anxious night they'd all had at Marlow. He told her that when he finally left in Lady Lampeter's motor-car, its owner was believed to be out of danger.

"You didn't come in a motor-car just now, did you?" Mrs. Roach asked.

"No," he said; "I stopped it in the High Street and walked on. I didn't want to wake you up, my love, with the noise of a car outside your window."

"How thoughtful of you, Samson," she said. "I'm sure your presence at her bedside has been a great comfort to that poor old thing."

"Let us hope so," he said modestly. "But get back to your bed, Sophanisba. I will tell you all about it at breakfast. Meanwhile I confess that I have but one desire — to get between my sheets."

He entered his bedroom and closed the door. Three minutes later his desire was gratified.

(2)

After breakfast he went to his study and called up Chloë on the telephone.

"I feel, Chloë," he said, "that it's only right to let you know that when I told you I had not got a manuscript of 'Edgar and Lilian" in the Sloane Street Safe Deposit, I lied. In other words I *have* such a manuscript in that place and to it I propose to draw the attention of the Incorporated Society of Authors with the least possible delay. I am aware that this may result in your laying an information against me with the Great Western Railway, but that I can't help. You must do exactly as you please about that, of course. My love to dear Bisham," and he rang off.

He then wrote a letter, marked "Strictly Private and Excessively Confidential," to the Secretary of the Authors' Society, which said:

The Vicarage,
Old Kensington.

Percy Turton, Esq.,
My dear Sir,

I venture to solicit your aid in settling a dispute which has arisen regarding the authorship of two recently-published and highly successful novels. Both parties to this dispute are well known to me, and I have induced them to submit their claims to you, in your official capacity as arbiter. The matter is so important, not only to the persons directly concerned, but to English Letters, that I feel I am justified in suggesting to you that you should associate with yourself a committee of writers—say, five in number, whose position in the World of Letters is thoroughly established and whose verdict is likely to be accepted by the public. The responsibility of making a decision in this matter is

one which no man would willingly assume alone. I leave the composition of this committee to you entirely, for it would ill become me to suggest any names. Whomsoever you appoint will be loyally accepted, as will be their verdict. In conclusion, I must tell you that it will be necessary for you and your associates to attend at the Sloane Street Safe Deposit, where documentary evidence of a conclusive nature will be submitted to you, and in no other place can this be done. The day and time, however, it is for you to fix in accordance with the full convenience of yourself and your associates.

Trusting to hear from you favourably,

I am, dear sir,

Yours very faithfully,

Samson Roach.

This letter he despatched at once by special messenger.

(3)

Had the letter of the Archdeacon been signed by the most obscure of names, the secretary of the Incorporated Society of Authors, Playwrights, Musicians and Continuity Fakers could hardly have declined to take upon it action of some sort. It was impossible for a Society whose business it is to keep unremitting watch over the welfare of (among other things) English letters—with a peculiarly sharp eye for the sinister activities of publishers and literary agents—it was impossible for such a Society to draw apart when its assistance was invoked in a matter so peculiarly within the sphere of its activities as a question of disputed authorship.

But when at the foot of this letter was found the signature of the universally-respected Archdeacon of Cricklewood and

Vicar of Old Kensington, there was only one thing to be done and Mr. Turton did it.

He telephoned forthwith to Sir John Dubbs and said: "Sir John, I have a letter from Archdeacon Roach, asking me to form a committee to investigate an important question of literary authorship. Apparently the principal piece of evidence is in the Sloane Street Safe Deposit, and we are invited to attend there so as to be present at its production. It occurs to me that a certain amount of publicity can be worked in connection with this rather unusual——"

"Count on me," said Sir John at the other end of the wire. "Any day, any time, my dear Turton, and thanks for thinking of me."

"Then," said Mr. Turton, "to-morrow at midday," and rang off.

In the course of another five telephone calls Mr. Turton had his numbers made up. His Committee consisted of himself (Chairman), Sir John Dubbs, O.B.E., I.O.U., P.P.C.; Sir Ecclesford Smee, P.T.O., C.O.D., R.S.V.P.; Sir William Keyne, O.P., L.S.W.R.; Mrs. Cutbush-Threape, S.O.S.; Miss June Badger, A.N.S.C.L.; and Miss Niobe Symkyn, Hop 2007.

Mr. Turton then telephoned to the Archdeacon and told him that the Committee would meet him at the Sloane Street Safe Deposit on the following day at twelve noon. Not an hour had elapsed since the despatch of the Archdeacon's letter from the Vicarage.

(4)

The Archdeacon then sent a note to Chloë, which read as follows:

The Vicarage,
Old Kensington.

My dearest Chloë,

I want you and dear Bisham to know that the Authors' Society is sending a Committee to the Sloane Street Safe Deposit to-morrow at midday to investigate my claim to be the author of "Trixie" and "Edgar and Lilian." It is only right that Bisham should have an opportunity of being present, and I cordially invite him to make one of our number. You, too, my dear, of course. My warmest love to Bisham and yourself.

Your affectionate
Father.

CHAPTER XVI

(1)

WHEN Chloë received this note she put on her hat, went straight down to Scotland Yard and told them that she wished to make a communication of an exceptionally confidential nature, whereupon she was ushered into the presence of the official whose duty it was to deal with such matters. His name was Inspector Olivarez. He courteously begged Mrs. Bisham Dunkle to be seated and to state her business. She might, he added, rely implicitly upon his allowing what she might say to go no farther. Not an inch.

Chloë walked over to a screen which

stood in a corner of the room and pulled it aside. Having thus disclosed a young man in a chair, who licked the point of a pencil while he spread open a notebook on his knee. "Yes," she said, "there you are, my lad, aren't you? Push off, I prithee. As for you, you mendacious old bald-head," she went on briskly to Inspector Olivarez, "I'm ashamed of you, that I am. No wonder the Criminal Investigation Department of this place is a laughing-stock, if that's all you can do in the way of deception."

Inspector Olivarez spread his hands. "Ah," he said, "but we don't often have to do with such very wide-awake young ladies as yourself. The device is crude, I admit, but it's generally quite effective. Henderson," he went on to his pencil-licking subordinate, "we cannot hope to put it across Mrs. Dunkle. You may go.

And now," he concluded, when Mr. Henderson had passed through the door, "and now, my dear lady, what about it?"

"Well," said Chloë, as she sat down facing him, "it's this way. I believe—but I'm not quite certain—that I can put you on to a person who, several years ago, committed a crime. He's one of several people who will be at the Sloane Street Safe Deposit to-morrow at midday. I want you to send a plain-clothes man to meet me there and to stand by to arrest this person in case I find that I can definitely charge him. Will you do it?"

"You prefer," asked Inspector Olivarez, tapping his teeth with his thumb-nail, "to be no more particular in your statements at present? You don't wish to say what the crime is, for example? Or when it was committed? Or where?"

"No," she said, "I don't!"

"I can see," he said, scratching his ear, "that it wasn't a murder." He said this hoping that she would say, "Well, that's where you're jolly well mistaken, because it was." He was disappointed.

"I shan't say what it wasn't," she replied, "nor yet what it was. Them as lives longest'll learn most, Inspector."

The Inspector rubbed his left eye with his right forefinger.

"It's evident," he said, "that it happened more than ten years ago." He trusted that she would reply, "Well, you're wrong, because it happened only five years ago." Again he was foiled.

"It's evident," she said tartly, "that you're a very clever old gentleman, aren't you? But am I to have this plain-clothes man?"

The Inspector tried a new snare. He was infinitely resourceful.

"I happen to know," he said, passing a palm across his baldness, "that it took place at Much Wenlock." His design was to make her cry out, "Sold again! It took place at Weston-super-Mare," or, as the case might be. She did nothing of the sort.

"Come, come, Inspector," she said. "Enough of this verbal sword-play. That plain-clothes man—do you send him or don't you?"

The Inspector had now tried everything he knew. He raised his hand to his forehead, saluting his visitor's superior intelligence, scratched his right temple and said, "I see, Mrs. Dunkle, that I can't hope to get anything out of you that you don't want to give away. So be it. The officer you ask for shall be placed at your disposal. Where did you say you wanted him to meet you? Threadneedle Street?"

"No, you blitherer; Sloane Street."

"Ah, yes," he murmured. "Outside the Record Office, wasn't it?"

"No, old fool. Inside the Safe Deposit."

"Of course, of course. This day week, you said, didn't you; and at four o'clock a.m. precisely?"

"My garters!" she cried. "I said to-morrow, and at midday."

"Perfectly, perfectly, my dear Mrs. Dunkle," he cooed. "Yes, yes, I've got all that down. You may depend on us absolutely. The man you require shall be there. He will be wearing a black bowler hat, a black morning coat and waistcoat, striped trousers and brown boots. His necktie will be Cambridge blue, with a small pearl and ruby pin in it. He will, in a word, be got up to pass as a rich client of the Safe Deposit who has come

to clip the coupons off his War Savings Certificates. Yes, yes! And now I need detain you no longer, I think. No, no. Yes, yes."

" Quite, quite," she said and left him.

CHAPTER XVII

(1)

THE Archdeacon reached the Sloane Street Safe Deposit at about a quarter before midday. At ten minutes to the hour Mr. Turton made his appearance in the waiting-room. While he was introducing himself to the Archdeacon (whom he knew by his gaiters) Sir John Dubbs manifested himself with his press agent, Mr. Filting. While Mr. Turton was introducing the Archdeacon and Sir John to one another, Miss Badger and her press agent, Mrs. Tanner, came in. Mr. Turton had hardly introduced the Archdeacon to Miss Badger when Sir Ecclesford Smee and

his press agent, Miss Richborough, entered. Mr. Turton proceeded to introduce the Archdeacon and Sir Ecclesford to one another, and while he was doing this, Miss Symkyn showed up with her press agent, Mr. Brimblecombe. Sir William Keyne arrived with his press agent, Mr. Solomons, while Mr. Turton was introducing the Archdeacon to Miss Symkyn. Mr. Turton at once introduced the Archdeacon and Sir William to one another. The conclusion of this ceremony synchronised with the arrival of Mrs. Cutbush-Threape and her two press agents, Mr. Hatherley and Miss Adger. Mr. Turton hastened to introduce the Archdeacon to Mrs. Cutbush-Threape.

The representatives of the *Gazette Machin* and the *Courier Chose* (who had been present since half-past eleven) expended several hundred feet of film upon

these noteworthy arrivals and introductions.

On the stroke of twelve Chloë, Dunkle, and their plain-clothes man (whose name was James Porlock) became visible in the outer vestibule. " Ah ! " exclaimed the Archdeacon, " my daughter and my son-in-law, Bisham Dunkle."

He rubbed his hands together and advanced, beaming, upon the couple. " My dear Chloë ! " he cried, " how good of you and dear Bisham to come ! I offer you," he added in a whisper as he came up to them, " one last chance of yielding gracefully to the inevitable. Give me your promise, Bisham, to join in my communication to the press, and——"

" Do you see the beery-looking merchant who's reading the ' Instructions in Case of Fire ' ? " Chloë hissed in his ear, while she pretended to embrace him. " He's a plain-

clothes man. I have only to say one word and he will clap the darbies on you and lead you away to durance vile. And that's what I'll do, s'welp me, if you don't turn this business up. If I believed that you really have that manuscript locked up here, I'd have had you arrested already. But it's my idea that you're trying to bluff us. Don't push the bluff too far, that's all."

Sir William Keyne came bustling forward, a thing he could always be trusted to do. "Now, my dear Archdeacon," he said, "we're all present and ready to hear what you have to say. So this is your son-in-law, Mr. Dunkle, is it? Permit me to introduce myself, Mr. Dunkle. I am Sir William Keyne, the novelist. It gives me very great pleasure to meet you, Mr. Dunkle, though I don't happen to have read either of your books. You see, as a

member of the Worst Sellers' Dining Club, I am precluded by my oath from reading any work of fiction which sells more than three hundred and fifty copies in Great Britain. Nevertheless——"

"Oh, shut up," said Chloë. At the same moment she drove the point of her parasol vigorously into the ribs of Sir William. "Now then, Venerable," she went on, while Sir William fell back gasping and clutching at his side, "which is it to be—Peace or War?"

"It is for you to choose, my love," said the Archdeacon.

"That be hanged!" said Chloë. "The decision rests with you. If you've got that manuscript and care to produce it, do so and see me whistle up my sleuth-dog. If you haven't, say so like a man."

"I won't conceal from you, Chloë," said the Archdeacon, "that I would much

rather arrange this matter in a friendly way. I don't want to have a lawsuit with Bisham, but if you force me to it, I am ready to fight. But if I fight and win—as I shall and must—I give you warning, my dear child, that of any future money that my books, whether published or to be published, may earn, not one penny shall come your way. Your income from the sale of my novels will automatically cease on the day when I am confirmed in my claim to be their author. On the other hand, if you and Bisham will be reasonable and admit publicly that it was I who wrote 'Trixie' and 'Edgar and Lilian,' I am willing to assign to you all royalties that may come to me henceforward from my fiction."

"Chloë, old germ," said Dunkle, "don't you think we might——"

"No," she snapped, "I don't! I tell

you he's bluffing. I knew he was before, but this proves it up to the chin. He hasn't got any manuscript in any lock-up box anywhere. It's obvious. If he could prove his story, do you suppose he'd be offering to buy our corroboration? Why should he? It isn't as if he likes us. It isn't as if he was yearning to hand over his royalties to us. No, what I say is, let's stick to our authorship and our royalties too. How do we know he'll write any more novels? He's an old man. He may die any time. If we've admitted that he wrote 'Trixie,' where should we be then? No, I'd rather keep the trade name. As I've told you, Bisham, if you can't write a successor to 'Edgar and Lilian,' *I* jolly well can. So come on, Venerable. Into the lift with you and down into the bowwows of the earth. These ladies and gentlemen are busy

people, I expect, and our plain-clothes man has something rather better to do than hang about in this stuffy little waiting-room all day."

The Archdeacon sighed. "So be it, Chloë," he said. "But you'll be sorry for this. You will, I assure you." Then, turning to the assembled authors, press agents, cinematographers and secretary—"Come, ladies and gentlemen," he said. "Let us go down to the strong-rooms."

In three journeys of the lift the whole party was conveyed below ground and assembled in the lobby, whence access was obtained to the Safe Deposit proper.

(2)

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," said the Archdeacon, "if you will be so good as to wait here, I will go and fetch what I have to show you. The regulations of

this place forbid my taking any of you with me behind that steel gate. But I shall be gone no more than a moment."

He passed behind the barrier and, accompanied by an official of the Safe Deposit, vanished into a strong-room.

At the end of three minutes he re-appeared, carrying a small dispatch-case. This, after he had come back through the barrier, he laid on the table which occupied the centre of the lobby. The Committee and the rest of the party gathered curiously round.

"In this dispatch-case," the Archdeacon began, "is the manuscript of a published novel which was written by one whom for the purposes of this explanation I will call A. Hitherto the author of this work has been supposed, by the public, to be one whom I will call B. Into the reasons which led A to conceal his identity

behind that of B I will go presently. At the moment they are not important. I ask you, instead, to give the best of your attention to the following highly significant facts. The novel in question was published on the 15th July last. This manuscript (which is a copy of the original) was deposited by me in my locker here on the 31st of March last. It was, before being put away, sealed and dated by the secretary of this Safe Deposit, and the circumstance of its being so sealed and deposited was recorded by him in his books. If, then, I can now produce to you this manuscript, with its seals unbroken, I believe that I am right in saying that it will prove to be a rather convincing piece of evidence in favour of the claim by A, in whose handwriting it is, as against those of B to be the true author of the work in question."

He paused and looked inquiringly round.

"Yes, Archdeacon," said Sir John Dubbs. "I fancy that we may grant you so much. Eh, Mr. Turton?"

"I don't say 'no,' Sir John," said Mr. Turton. "No, I don't say 'no' to that On the other hand, I don't say 'yes.' I conceive, ladies and gentlemen," he went on to the others, "that in an inquiry such as this, which promises to be of so much importance to English Letters, it behoves us to walk very warily." To this all his associates murmured a vague assent.

"May we not know," asked Mrs. Cutbush-Threape, "the name of this novel?"

"Yes," said Sir Ecclesford Smee, Sir William Keyne, Miss Badger and Miss Symkyn all together, "may we not know the name of the novel?"

"As to that," the Archdeacon replied, "I must ask you to bear with me one further moment while, with your permission, I have a word with my daughter and son-in-law. Chloë, my dear. Bisham. A word with you over here." He carried his dispatch-case into a corner of the lobby, where his young relatives joined him.

"Now then," he whispered, "here we are at the critical moment. Which is it to be? Am I to exhibit my manuscript to these people and so force Bisham to admit my claim, or is Bisham to admit it without compulsion? Remember, please, that if you make me produce the manuscript, your income from the sale of my books ceases automatically; whereas if you give in, it continues undiminished. Now choose, and quickly."

"Not us," whispered Chloë. "It's for

you to decide. Are you going to persist in this imbecility and be given in charge for swindling the railway, or are you going to send all these blitherers away and resume diplomatic relations with us according to the *status quo ante* ? "

" You see, dear Chloë," he whispered, " I don't believe that you will give me in charge."

" Well," she whispered back, " I don't believe that you've got any manuscript in that dispatch-case."

" It's a deadlock," whispered Dunkle. " That's what it is. A deadlock. Oh, for a formula, however unsatisfactory to both parties ! "

At this moment the lift descended. Its gate was drawn back with a crash, and from it the Prime Minister emerged. In his hand was a brown-paper parcel.

(3)

As he stepped briskly across the lobby towards the steel gate his eye lit upon Archdeacon Roach. He halted and uttered a glad exclamation Then, changing his direction, he moved straight upon the corner where the Archdeacon, Chloë and Dunkle were posted.

"My dear Archdeacon!" he cried, extending both hands. "But this is providential! You're the very man I wanted to see. The fact is," he went on, "that our good old friend the Bishop of Pontefract has passed in his checks. This morning it happened, and I've just had the news. I was going to telephone to you as soon as I've put away this small parcel of Waitabit Creek Oil Cumulative Preference Gold Debenture Bonds which reached me by the second post."

The Archdeacon's heart began to pound. "Telephone to me, Prime Minister!" he cried. "Why to me?"

"Because I'm offering you the billet, of course," said the Prime Minister. "Are you for it, Archdeacon? Yes or no? We may as well settle the matter here and now. Come! Do you take Pontefract or don't you?"

"Yes," said the Archdeacon. "Thank you," he added, recollecting himself.

"Good!" cried the Prime Minister. "Then that's that. Consider yourself a bishop, my very dear sir. Good-bye, good-bye." He passed through the steel gate.

Chloë clapped her hands together.

"Oh," she cried, "how pleased dear mamma will be!"

"Yes," said Dunkle, "won't she?"

"I imagine," whispered Chloë to her

father, "that you will now be sensible. You will hardly throw away this bishopric, I suppose. For I need hardly say that bishoprics are never conferred upon people who have been convicted of——"

"Enough, Chloë," said her father. "I give in. The Prime Minister spoke more truly than he knew when he said that this meeting was providential. It is, indeed, out of the question that I should disregard so very direct an indication. Yes, my dear children, I see now that I have been mad—quite, quite mad. But I am sane again. Quite. Absolutely. Yes. Bisham is the author of 'Trixie.' Bisham is the author of 'Edgar and Lilian.' And if, in time to come, I yield yet again to the temptation to exercise, under the rose, my gift for fiction, it shall be Bisham who shall be the author of such tales as I may produce."

"Splendid, Pontifex!" said Chloë "And if you don't, I will. But now, what about buzzing round to the Vicarage and telling dear old mother the good news? About your bishopric, I mean."

"Surely," said the Archdeacon. "That is my very first duty. After you into the lift, my love."

The three of them entered the lift and were instantly carried upwards.

"Tell me, Venerable, won't you," said Chloë as they ascended, "what you've got in that dispatch-case of yours. Is it just some old newspapers, or what?"

"That," said the Archdeacon, "is a question which I shall not answer, but perhaps," he added roguishly, "perhaps your plain-clothes man, Chloë, might tell you."

The lift stopped; they walked out and emerged into Sloane Street. Dunkle

called a cab. They got in and drove to the Vicarage.

Shall we leave them there?

We shall.

THE END

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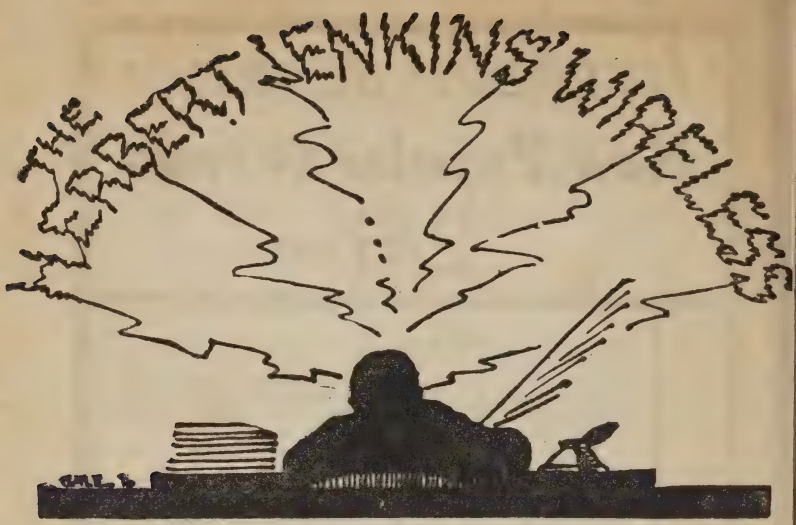

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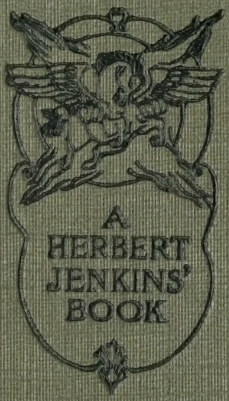
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